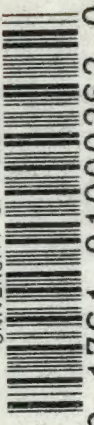


B
L 379
D

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 01000363 0

LAUZUN: COURTIER
AND ADVENTURER

Vol. I



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



Le Duc de Laurun.
From a picture in the possession of the Duc de la Force
by permission of the owner & Mess^{rs} Hachette et Cie.

LAUZUN: COURTIER AND ADVENTURER

The Life of a Friend of Louis XIV

By MARY F. SANDARS

Author of "Honoré de Balzac, His Life
and Writings"

VOL. I

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S

1909

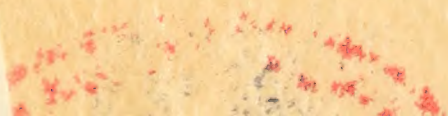
1869
L

1869
L

MICROFILMED BY
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
MASTER NEGATIVE NO:
120076

DISCARD

12/21
1



43231

LAUZUN: COURTIER AND ADVENTURER

The Life of a Friend of Louis XIV

By MARY F. SANDARS

Author of "Honore de Balzac, His Life
and Writings"

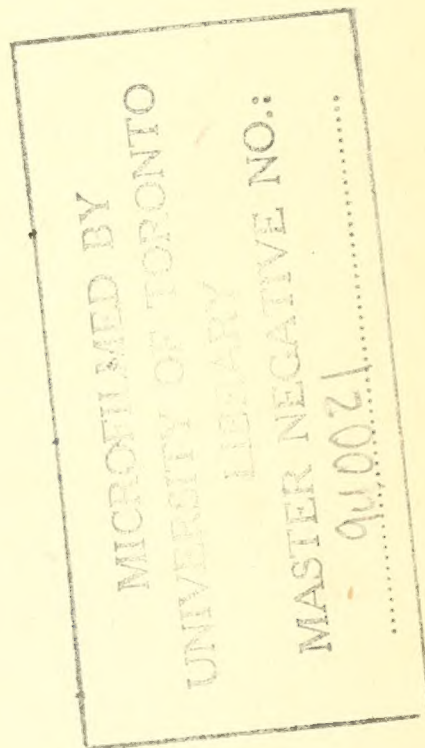
Bing
L.

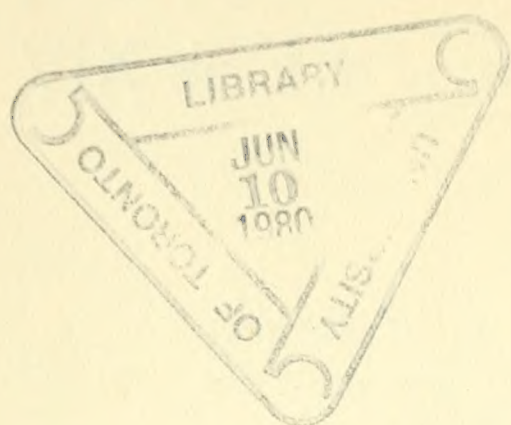
VOL. I

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S

1909





PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

DC

130

L37S26

1909

v.1

P R E F A C E

THE biographer of the Comte, afterwards Duc de Lauzun, Louis XIV.'s favourite, and the lover, indeed husband of the Grande Mademoiselle, cannot claim to have written the life of a great man, nor indeed of one of commanding talent.

On the other hand, Lauzun was a remarkable personage, a personage who astonished his contemporaries, and whose very eccentricities make him interesting. Besides, what a life of movement his was !

He started life as the penniless younger son of an ancient but impoverished family, became a successful courtier, an intimate friend of his Sovereign, and was engaged with royal consent to that Sovereign's first cousin, the richest heiress in Europe.

Then followed a sudden downfall, and ten years' suffering in the gloomy fortress of Pignerol, only diversified by a most ingenious and daring attempt to escape. At last he emerged, but only into the twilight of semi-disgrace and exile from Court.

In the opinion of his contemporaries, it seemed as though his career were now over, but to every one's astonishment he rose for what Madame de Sévigné

terms the "second volume" of his life ; became intimate friend and adviser to James the Second and Mary of Modena, contrived and executed the escape from England of Mary of Modena and the infant Prince of Wales, and was eventually made Captain-General of the forces sent by Louis XIV. to support the Jacobite army in Ireland.

The task of leader of an army was, however, too big for the little courtier, and in spite of his outward magnificence, he was, in the latter part of his life, a worsted and disappointed man.

It may in fact be truly said of him that, having an extraordinary capacity for making to himself exceptional opportunities for great things, he was never powerful enough to take full advantage of them.

In the course of his adventures we obtain interesting sidelights on the Ancien Régime, and on the power and limitations of power of its chief exponent, the Grand Monarque. It is difficult to understand the workings of that old world as clearly in political matters as we do when we are brought close to Louis XIV.'s domestic affairs, and see his tactics when—for instance—he is scheming to obtain an inheritance for the Duc du Maine.

I have tried to portray as far as possible the spirit of that hard, brilliant, sordid era, and have sought for information mainly in contemporary memoirs. I have given special attention to the chapters on the Jacobite War in Ireland, and have spent considerable

time conning over the letters written to Louvois by Lauzun and his subordinates from the Emerald Isle, which are now in the Ministère de la Guerre in Paris. These letters were generally dictated to secretaries, but sometimes—unfortunately for the modern reader—the correspondent himself takes the pen in his unaccustomed fingers, and then the task becomes a hard one—especially when he deals with Irish and English proper names !

Nevertheless, the searcher is well repaid for his trouble, for the people—with their varied hopes, fears, aims, and ambitions—live again in those yellow pages ; and the information in the chapters on the Jacobite Wars is derived mainly from the perusal of them. Much of it has never—as far as I know—been published before ; and as Ireland is an ever-recurring problem, it may be interesting to hear something from a French view of her melancholy and distracted condition over two hundred years ago.

I must thank Madame Arvède Barine most heartily for her very kind assistance. Her charming books, “*La Jeunesse de la Grande Mademoiselle*,” and “*Louis XIV. et la Grande Mademoiselle*,” with their inimitably light style, yet depth of information, have been translated into English, and are classics on the subject of Louis XIV.’s reign. My only excuse for venturing to write on a theme closely akin to the one she has so brilliantly handled, is that much of Lauzun’s life—his English experiences in par-

ticular—took place after the Grande Mademoiselle had been gathered to her fathers, and that many of his adventures, even in early life, do not come within the scope of her volumes.

I cannot finish without testifying my gratitude to Prince Radolin, and to the Baron de Barante, for their kindness in procuring for me exceptional opportunities of obtaining information in Paris, and I must also thank the Baronne Pichon for showing me the Hôtel Lauzun, which is now in the process of restoration, and for giving me much interesting information about it.

MARY F. SANDARS.

CONTENTS

VOL. I.

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
The strange personality of the Comte de Lauzun—His amazing fortunes—Character of Louis XIV—The Grande Mademoiselle's love for Lauzun—His marriage—La Bruyère and La Beaumelle on his character	I

CHAPTER II

De Lauzun's ancestry—His education with the Gramonts—His first campaign—He becomes Cornet, then Colonel of "Dragons Étrangers"—Serves under Duke of York—Distinguishes himself under Turenne—Lauzun and Mazarin	20
---	----

CHAPTER III

Life at Court—Louis XIV.'s youth—Lessons of the Fronde—The King's dislike of Paris—Anne of Austria—Complications caused by the presence of the exiled Stuarts at the Court—Surprise of Grande Mademoiselle after her exile at the want of ceremonial at Court—Character and appearance of the Grande Mademoiselle—Her life before she met Lauzun .	42
--	----

CHAPTER IV

The Court and Mazarin's nieces—Madame de Soissons—Aspirants for the position of Queen of France—Marie de Mancini—Question of the King's marriage with the Princess Marguerite of France	64
---	----

CHAPTER V

Meeting between the Courts of France and of Savoy—Anne of Austria's despair—Hand of the Infanta offered by King of	
--	--

	PAGE
Spain—The Court leaves Lyons—Louis XIV and Marie de Mancini—Their parting—Louis marries the Infanta—Her character—Death of Mazarin—Marie de Mancini's marriage—Monsieur's marriage—Character of Henriette d'Orléans—Court intrigues—Fouquet's trial—His imprisonment for life .	86

CHAPTER VI

Lauzun's fortunes and character—His love affair with Mademoiselle de Gramont—She is married to the Prince of Monaco—Remains at the French Court—Lauzun follows her in disguise on her journey to Italy—Madame de Monaco's character—The King admires her—Lauzun sent to the Bastille in consequence	110
---	-----

CHAPTER VII

Description of the Bastille—Vardes and Bussy-Rabutin also there—Reasons for Lauzun's imprisonment as announced through Europe—His release—His revenge on Madame de Monaco—Louis' defence of him—His increasing favour .	130
---	-----

CHAPTER VIII

Grand Review—Lauzun's love-affairs—King's growing indifference for La Vallière—Madame de Montespan's career; her connection with the poisoners—Alliance between Lauzun and Madame de Montespan—War with Flanders—Madame de Montespan ousts La Vallière—Lauzun's prowess in Flanders—Louis conquers Franche-Comté .	151
--	-----

CHAPTER IX

The Grande Mademoiselle becomes more and more interested in Lauzun—Lauzun tries for the post of Grand Master of the Artillery—Loses it through indiscretion—Asks for Madame de Montespan's help—She betrays him—His revenge—He is made Captain of the King's Guard .	172
--	-----

CHAPTER X

Lauzun tries to obtain possession of Lorraine—His love-affair with Mademoiselle—Lauzun conveys the Duc du Maine to	
--	--

Contents

xi

	PAGE
Madame Scarron—Madame de Montespan writes to him— Project of expedition through Flanders—Behind it design to conquer Holland—Mademoiselle's increasing love for him— Question of her marriage with the Duc de Longueville—Start of expedition through Flanders	193

CHAPTER XI

The expedition through Flanders—Uncomfortable night owing to floods—Continued love-making—Death of Henriette of Orleans—The King proposes that Mademoiselle shall marry Monsieur—Her trouble at the proposal—Lauzun is apparently resigned	212
--	-----

CHAPTER XII

The question of Mademoiselle's marriage to Monsieur—The affair comes to nothing—Lauzun's supper-party—Mademoiselle tells him she wishes to marry him—Lauzun's answer—A backward wooer—Mademoiselle writes to ask the King for his consent to her marriage with Lauzun	237
---	-----

CHAPTER XIII

Louis XIV.'s answer—Mademoiselle's interview with him— Lauzun's anxieties—Projects of marriage for him—Prepara- tions for Mademoiselle's and Lauzun's wedding—Depu- tation from nobility ask for Mademoiselle's hand for Lauzun—King gives formal consent—Monsieur's indigna- tion—Disapproval shown by the Queen—Sensation throughout Europe—Madame de Sévigné's famous letter on the subject	259
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV

Ominous rumours—Delay in preparations for the marriage— Mademoiselle hands over all her property to Lauzun—"Ce malheureux jeudi"—Difficulties and delays increase—The King prevents the marriage—Reasons for this—Made- moiselle's despair—Lauzun's self-control	282
--	-----

ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. I

DUC DE LAUZUN, FROM PICTURE BELONGING TO DUC DE LA FORCE.	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
ANNE OF AUSTRIA, QUEEN-REGENT OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE .	54
CARDINAL MAZARIN	66
MARIE-THÉRÈSE OF AUSTRIA, QUEEN OF FRANCE	98
CHARLOTTE-CATHERINE DE GRAMONT, PRINCESS OF MONACO . .	122
LOUISE DE LA VALLIÈRE	160
ANNE-MARIE-LOUISE D'ORLÉANS—THE GRANDE MADEMOISELLE .	202
HENRIETTE D'ORLÉANS WITH THE PORTRAIT OF PHILIPPE DE FRANCE	232
LOUIS XIV.	276

LAUZUN

Courtier and Adventurer

CHAPTER I

The strange personality of the Comte de Lauzun—His amazing fortunes—Character of Louis XIV—The Grande Mademoiselle's love for Lauzun—His marriage—La Bruyère and La Beaumelle on his character.

“**H**IS life is a romance ; no, it lacks likelihood. He did not have adventures, he had beautiful dreams, he had bad ones. What am I saying ! People do not dream as he has lived.”

Under the pseudonym “Straton,” La Bruyère thus describes Antonin Nompar de Caumont, Marquis de Puyguilhem, afterwards Comte de Lauzun, and before the end of his life Duc de Lauzun.

Saint-Simon is hardly less astonished at the amazing fortunes of the strange little man who only by his own vanity missed marriage with the richest Royal heiress of her time—a lady so important that she had been mentioned as a possible bride for several of the greatest monarchs in Europe. “De Lauzun was,” he says, “one of those prodigies of fortune

and singularity who arouse curiosity in people of their own time, as well as in those who follow."

His words have certainly come true, for the little Gascon, with his courage and glitter, his power of worsting his adversaries by repartee and superior cunning as well as by blows, his Don Juan-like proclivities, his knight-errantry—though often on more than doubtful quests—has served in part for the hero of many of Dumas' romantic novels. Putting aside a want of chivalry occasionally approaching brutality in his dealings with women, a characteristic he shared with most of his contemporaries, he was indeed a true knight of romance, a relic of past ages, more fit to adorn a story than to take his place in the sober pages of history. Interesting personality though he is, his life seems at first sight absolutely unimportant to posterity, a negligible quantity in solid tomes devoted to the record of wars and political treaties. Yet—though in a secondary position—he was involved in most of the important affairs of his time ; was a valued friend, and later a violent enemy, to Madame de Montespan ; planned and carried out the escape from England of Mary of Modena and of the little Prince of Wales, afterwards known as the Old Pretender ; and was for some months Captain-General of Louis XIV.'s forces in Ireland.

At the apogee of his career his fortune seemed dazzling. For the space of four days the penniless courtier became Duc de Montpensier, and his royal

fiancée presented him with four duchies, the gross value of which was estimated at twenty-four millions of francs : the Comté d'Eu, the Duchy of Montpensier, the Duchy of Saint-Fargeant, and the Duchy of Châtellerault. This infatuation on the part of a lady who was six years his senior was perhaps not wholly astonishing—in spite of the fact that the little oddity with his tow-coloured hair, and the blotched face rudely likened by Saint-Simon to a “skinned cat,” was a strange object for adoration. The amazing thing about the matter, however, was the fact that from Monday till Thursday Louis XIV. consented to the proposed marriage, although it was looked upon as such a violent upheaval of society that Monsieur, the Princes of the Blood, the nobility, Parliament, and even the middle classes were furious at the idea of it, and begged the King to reconsider his decision, in the interests of his State, and for the sake of his reputation with Europe. So terrible was the prospect that even the timid Queen was horrified at the terrible step contemplated by her imprudent relation, and dared to reproach Louis for having consented to his cousin's madness. The matter put all France in a ferment, which Madame de Sévigné pictures graphically in one of her most famous letters.

Why did Louis XIV., the “Grand Monarque,” with whom matters of etiquette were exalted to a religion, think even for a moment of countenancing

4 Lauzun: Courtier and Adventurer

a marriage so amazing? The answer to this question can only be found in the power Lauzun undoubtedly exercised over his royal master. That this power did not always spring from noble sources or lead to worthy ends, is an undoubted fact; that the post of Mercury to a royal Jupiter, as the positions are depicted in Molière's play l' "Amphitryon," entailed much unsavoury work, is certain. Nevertheless, many courtiers who blamed Lauzun would have willingly licked the dust to gratify the desires of the Sun-God, be they what they might; and the fact that in the race for the royal favour Lauzun outstripped them all, points certainly to his possession of peculiar and valuable qualities.

Therefore his history seems worthy of record, for other reasons even than his romantic adventures. Success is always interesting, and even more so, perhaps, the story of a sudden fall from the heights, a miscalculation, a lapse in judgment, which lands a man in a dungeon in Pignerol, when but for his own mistake a position awaits him higher than his most glorious hopes could have imagined.

It may be objected that Lauzun's aims were low, that he was at best a pinchbeck hero. That may be so. He was small physically, and perhaps in certain ways small mentally and morally as well. Nevertheless, if we take the trouble to shift our position for the moment from the lofty standpoint of our modern daily life, transport ourselves in

imagination to France in the time of Louis XIV. and place ourselves to the best of our powers in Lauzun's position, I think we shall pause before we despise him for being a servile courtier. It is given to few of us to emancipate ourselves from the spirit of the period in which we live ; why shall we blame Lauzun because he refused to join the forlorn ranks of a few lofty, unadaptable failures ?

The age was artificial ; never before or since in the world's history has a society existed which was so utterly detached from—and ignorant of—ordinary life as that of the Court of Louis XIV.

Nevertheless, the only career for the ambitious among the nobility was that of a courtier, for the Sun-God, Louis le Grand, was the sole source of advancement, and a man might eat his heart out in the provinces and never have the opportunity of using his talents, unless he came within the radius of the King's sight.

True, there were many at the Court who had waited for years for promotion, had attended any function to which they were admitted with tireless assiduity, had rushed in with a gaily dressed throng to see the King at dinner, had, with despair in their hearts, congratulated others on obtaining posts for which they themselves yearned, and had almost ceased to be men in their absorption in the vapid and brain-deadening round of senseless duties, which might almost as well have been performed by automaton.

6 Lauzun: Courtier and Adventurer

The position of the unsuccessful courtier was indeed tragic, for he was totally unfitted for the duties and pleasures of the ordinary world. "The Court," says the ironical La Bruyère,¹ "does not give happiness, but it prevents happiness elsewhere."

Hear the same writer on the perfect courtier: "A man who knows the Court is master of his gestures, eyes, and expression; he is profound, impenetrable; he pretends not to see the bad turns done to him, smiles at his enemies, controls his temper, does violence to his heart, speaks and acts against his own feelings."

This is at any rate a high and enviable idea of self-control, and even if the object for which the training is gone through be faulty, the person who attains to it can hardly be looked upon as absolutely despicable. "The Court"—La Bruyère remarks in another place—"is like a marble edifice: I mean that it is composed of very hard but very polished men."

Lauzun, however, was not perfect in this respect; at a crucial point in his life he failed in the absolute tact and knowledge of men required from the perfect courtier, and so missed the brilliant fortune which awaited him. He did worse, he showed anger against the powerful enemy who had ruined his hopes, and he only expiated that offence by ten years of despairing imprisonment.

¹ Bruyère, "Caractères. De la Cour."

Therefore, he was not a perfect courtier. But if he had been the marvel of dissimulation depicted by La Bruyère, it is doubtful whether we should have heard much about him, and whether the dazzling position of becoming first cousin to his Sovereign would ever have been within his reach.

His power of fascination was undoubted, though it is difficult to account for it now, when the record from varying sources of his sayings and doings inclines the reader to favour the opinion expressed by the Marquis de la Fare, that he was "the most insolent little man who had been seen for a century";¹ but certainly this fascination sprang partly from the fact that he was "an original." "For his humour and his ways," cried the Grande Mademoiselle admiringly, "I defy any one to understand them, to describe them, or to copy them."²

Many devoted courtiers surrounded Louis XIV., but none resembled the eccentric person who, in an ecstasy of grief at parting from his royal master, refused to shave his beard all the time he was separated from him in the Bastille.

"A low and base courtier," Saint-Simon calls him.³ But if the accusation be merited, was there not a certain excuse for the position of humble adorer when the Sun-God was the object of adoration?

¹ Petitot, "Mémoires du Marquis de la Fare," ser. ii., vol. lxxv. p. 180.

² Chéruel, "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 249.

³ "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 307.

8 Lauzun : Courtier and Adventurer

Saint-Simon was not a favourite with his royal master, but he is careful to record at length any instance of a ray of favour falling in his direction ; indeed his joy at being permitted to hold the candle at the royal undressing is quite pathetic ; and slight envy was perhaps partly the cause of his detraction of the royal favourite. Saint-Simon had the privilege, or misfortune—whichever we may choose to term it—of being Lauzun's brother-in-law, and we know that coolnesses do occasionally arise between those whose sole relationship is some one else's marriage tie. Many other courtiers shared Saint-Simon's feeling of suspicious dislike to the royal favourite ; indeed we are told that the news of his arrival at Calais, bringing with him Mary of Modena and the infant Prince of Wales, fell like a bomb among the courtiers, who feared he would regain his former place in the good graces of Louis XIV.

And after all, was the Grand Monarque a very unworthy object for worship ? We are well acquainted with his weaknesses, his deviations from the laws of morality—we have all heard of La Vallière, Fontanges, Montespan, and several other frail ladies, and perhaps we realise how in later life his character was deformed by a cold selfishness which was to a certain extent the natural consequence of his position. Unless, however, we approach the subject from the standpoint of the stern Republican, and are, like Michelet, lashed to so intense a fury by

the adulation lavished on the Sun-God that we pour mud on him from any source, however doubtful ; or, on the other hand, looking at the matter from the narrowly modern view, we blame him severely for not being in advance of the ideas of his age, we shall surely find much not unworthy of admiration in Louis XIV. The young man who tried—however inadequately—to supplement the deficiencies of his neglected education ; the industrious worker who laboured steadily eight hours a day at his business of kingcraft ; above all, the Grand Monarque who only once in his old age, to the stupefaction of the Court, thoroughly lost his temper, and struck a valet, but who generally exhibited forbearance, control over his tongue and graceful politeness, even under extreme provocation,—was surely a personage for whom enthusiasm might be forgiven. Can we not imagine the general admiration when it was known that the Marquis d’Uxelles, who was sorely ashamed because he had surrendered Mayence after more than fifty days’ open work in the trenches, was consoled by these gracious words from his royal master : “ Marquis, you defended the place as a man of valour, you capitulated as a man of sense ” ; or that the Duc de Rochefoucauld, after being given the post of Grand Master to the Heralds’ Office, received a letter containing the words : “ I rejoice as friend over the present I have given you as master.” When the same

highly favoured nobleman complained of the cruelty of his creditors, the King said to him, "Is it *my* fault? You should talk to your friends about it!" and two hours afterwards sent him fifty thousand crowns.¹

What readiness, tact, and delicacy of feeling! When we read anecdotes like these, we marvel all the more at the cold-blooded egoism which led Louis to sacrifice the unfortunate La Vallière to his desire to carry on undisturbed his liaison with Madame de Montespan. It was no stupid, obtuse man—though in excuse it may be said that it was a man blinded by an overmastering passion—who watched with indifference the long-drawn-out torture of the only woman besides the Queen who ever loved him; and the excuse that it was not a chivalrous or a faithful age does not exonerate him from the charge of heartlessness.

Nevertheless, in spite of some very black spots on the radiance of the Sun-God, we cannot marvel at Lauzun's enthusiasm for his master, or consider his admiring attitude as solely a thirst for material benefits. Ambitious he was, but though the careers of our distinguished poets, painters or musicians hardly show them to be exempt from that failing,—if failing it be,—we do not on that account necessarily refuse them all other motives besides the one we deprecate.

¹ Choisy, "Mémoires," edit. 1888, vol. i. p. 22.

Let us therefore grant Lauzun—though he *was* a courtier—an affection, nay, more, an intense admiration for his royal master, and let us note that the little man was not without spirit, that he even dared several times to treat the King with the utmost insolence, and that on one occasion during a dispute with him, Louis was obliged to throw his cane out of the window because he was afraid of having to reproach himself afterwards with having struck a gentleman.¹ Lauzun was certainly not invariably a servile courtier, and perhaps therein lay his charm for his royal master.

He was a great favourite with ladies, a fact by which Saint-Simon is evidently puzzled; and after commenting on the unattractiveness of his appearance, he remarks sourly that Lauzun undoubtedly possessed great talents.²

There must certainly have been something extraordinarily fascinating about the alert little Gascon, who was almost abnormally alive in every fibre, who possessed the eyes of a lynx and the ears of a hare, combined with the quickness and resource of a fox. Not that these attributes always appeared on the surface, for the little man was an accomplished actor, and could veil them under an exterior so gentle, simple, and obliging, that he seemed almost a simpleton, while all the time his keen, restless

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 314.

² *Ibid.* vol. vii. p. 308.

spirit never ceased from his work of spying, collecting information, investigating, combining, and laying snares. This combination of characteristics does not sound attractive, but it must be remembered that words are absolutely powerless to convey any idea of the strange attribute of fascination, which depends completely on personal contact, and that the events of Lauzun's life show that he possessed this power to an unusual degree. The dull, heavy James II. of England, as well as his Consort, the saintly Mary of Modena, yielded to his sway, the English King presenting him with the Garter, and, in defiance of etiquette, dining alone with him and the Papal Nuncio, while the Queen interceded for him with Louis XIV., and remained his friend as long as she lived.

No doubt he ruled many of the smaller people with whom he came in contact by fear, for he had established himself in the position of licensed Court jester, and woe betide the unfortunate wight on whom he wished to revenge himself. Lauzun's quick wit, his power of pouncing upon any of his adversary's special weaknesses, and his utter want of scruple about covering even the friend—who had for the moment annoyed him—with ridicule, made him an alarming personage.

The Maréchal de Marsin, a pretty little man who flattered every one, and chattered incessantly, must have felt his face burn whenever his thoughts

turned to a certain humiliating episode in his career.

Soon after his promotion to the important post of Maréchal de France, he was going down the great staircase at Versailles, which was, as usual, crowded with courtiers. He was feeling and looking very happy and important, for he knew that for the moment he was the cynosure of all eyes. Suddenly Lauzun came up and respectfully offered him his hand. The Maréchal drew back astonished, but as Lauzun still extended his gloved hand, Marsin—who was, though puzzled, so flushed with success that at the moment any homage seemed possible—remarked politely that of course Lauzun was master to do what he pleased, and allowed him to walk backwards in front of him down the staircase. The Maréchal babbled excitedly all the way, but Lauzun was absolutely silent till they reached the lowest step. Then he started back, and crying in apparent surprise, “Ha, M. le Maréchal, I mistook you for a lady!” he turned his back on his mortified victim.¹

Even the King was not always safe from ridicule, especially after Lauzun had lost all hope of being reinstated in his former position as favourite.

Louis had given M. Voisin the post of Chancellor, while allowing him, at the same time, to keep that of Secretary of State for War, and being, as we know,

¹ Saint-Simon, “*Écrits inédits*,” vol. vii. pp. 331 and 332.

most particular in his later days about the minutiae of etiquette, he insisted that his unfortunate Minister should suit his costume to the function he was holding at the moment. Therefore Voisin had to appear at the Council in the morning in his Chancellor's robe, with the cordon-bleu worn attached to his collar. After dinner, he again worked with the King, but this time—though he wore his order in the same way—he donned a short cloak instead of his robe; and another change in the unfortunate man's costume took place in the evening, when he was often ordered to attend his Majesty during his walk, and appeared without a cloak, with a cane in his hand, and with the precious cordon worn scarf-wise. In private, every one laughed at these transformations, but no one dared to ridicule them openly, till Lauzun one day paid a round of visits in Paris, and was asked what was happening at Court. "Nothing," he said lightly; "they are playing for high stakes at Marly, and the King is dressing his doll."¹

The "mot" went from mouth to mouth, and it was shrewdly suspected that it reached the ears of the King and of Voisin—to whom Lauzun paid court assiduously—but both considered it good policy to suffer in silence.

Madame Desmarets, the wife of the Contrôleur-General of Finances, was enlarging one day to

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 332.

Lauzun about her husband's difficulties and constant anxiety during the war. "Really, Monsieur," she said, "every one complains with reason, for every one is very much pressed ; but after all, the most to be pitied is he who holds the handle of the frying-pan." "Pardon me, Madame," said de Lauzun gently ; "the most to be pitied are those inside."¹

Sometimes the little man amused himself by affecting extreme silliness, and answering without rhyme or reason any question which might be put to him. He would even do this occasionally to his royal master, who invariably enjoyed the joke immensely. Even after he had fallen into comparative disgrace, we hear that the King would laugh most heartily at some of his practical jokes. The victims did not, doubtless, look on the matter in the same amusing light. This, however, was an almost invariable and, no doubt, piquant consequence of Lauzun's peculiar form of wit. Some one must suffer.

Lauzun's wooing of the Grande Mademoiselle was an extremely clever performance, the lady being encouraged to think that she was making all the advances, and that Lauzun was too humble to understand her meaning, while, in reality, he was leading her on with consummate art. She chronicles his speeches and describes his manner so exactly

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 330.

that, according to Saint-Simon, in reading her memoirs one seems to hear Lauzun speak. Years after her death, as well as that of Louis XIV., Lauzun remarked that the Bourbons invariably required rough treatment; and certainly he was successful in his management of Louis XIV. and of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, though his passionate temper and vanity eventually lost him both valuable admirers.

The poor Grande Mademoiselle! Whatever her faults of temper or of pride may have been, they were amply expiated during the time of her connection with Lauzun, and it is pathetic to think that her one venture at loving and being loved like an ordinary mortal should have turned out so tragically. No one had ever shown her friendship, she says sadly in her memoirs, and she wanted once in her life to taste the sweetness of being loved by some one who was worthy of her affection. And when she was forty-two and he thirty-six, she chose Lauzun as her ideal. Could there have been a more fatal mistake?

The only possible excuse for her folly may be found in the fact that Lauzun, "little, dirty, and ugly,"¹ as Choisy rudely calls him, had—according to the same writer—owing "to his wit, vivacity, gasconnades, and certain occult qualities he possessed, enormous success with ladies."

Another woman who had a still more intimate

¹ "Choisy Mémoires," vol. ii. p. 218.

connection with Lauzun, and is still more to be pitied, is his wife. She was a child when she married him, and he was sixty-three years old, soured by the disappointment of all his magnificent hopes, and half maddened by ten years' imprisonment. Madame de Lauzun was the second daughter of the Maréchal de Lorges, who was persuaded to give his daughter to Lauzun by the inducement of his taking her penniless. The young bride consoled herself by thinking that she would be left a rich widow, but Lauzun lived for thirty years afterwards, and his poor wife suffered terribly from his unreasonable jealousies, and the passionate outbursts of fury which resembled fits of madness.

No doubt it was this strain of madness in Lauzun which ruined his fortunes over and over again, but which also helped to make him attractive, at least to those who were not brought into constant contact with him. There is always fascination in an incalculable quantity. Most men feared and hated him, but treated him with deference, for he respected no one's dignity, and they dreaded the ridicule to which he might at any time expose them. Women, however, were amused at the vagaries of the little gentleman who possessed few allies or friends, but who was afraid of no one, and defended himself by his ready wit, audacity, and presence of mind.

He was the fashion, and much was forgiven him.

“He said of himself,” remarks La Bruyère, “I am witty, I am courageous.” And every one repeated after him, “He is witty, he is courageous.”¹ Even this great psychologist is puzzled as to the personality of the man he attempts to portray, for he sums up thus: “An equivocal, complex, hidden character; an enigma, an almost undecided question.”

It may perhaps be worth while to follow in imagination the varied fortunes of the man whom his contemporaries, at any rate, have considered an interesting subject for conjecture and comment; who surprised and horrified them by his caprices, amused them by his wit, and gave them food for moral reflections when, after raising himself by his own exertions to heights to which they could never have attained, he fell by making mistakes of which, rightly or wrongly, they felt themselves incapable.

“This man had a strange destiny,” says Angliviel de la Beaumelle,² who wrote about thirty years after Lauzun’s death. “The younger son of a Gascon family, without property, without real wit, without striking talent,—after being his master’s rival he became his confidant, was on the point of becoming his ally, only approached the throne to fall into a long and hard imprisonment, whence he emerged

¹ La Bruyère, description of “Straton” in “Caractères. De la Cour.”

² “Mémoires de Madame de Maintenon,” vol. ii. p. 19.

to save a king and to grow old, hated by his own century and despised by ours.”

This pronouncement is very severe ; it seems doubtful whether Lauzun merited such wholesale condemnation.

CHAPTER II

Lauzun's ancestry—His education with the Gramonts—His first campaign—He becomes Cornet, then Colonel of "Dragons étrangers"—Serves under the Duke of York—Distinguishes himself under Turenne—Lauzun and Mazarin.

SAINTE-SIMON tells us¹ that the families of La Force and of Lauzun are supposed—though without actual proof—to have had a common origin in the ancient house of Caumont in Guyenne.

The two families, though they had different arms and liveries, acknowledged their relationship one to another, and disputed in a kinsmanlike manner as to which of the two represented the elder branch. General opinion sided—we are told—with the dukes of La Force, but the Lauzuns never acknowledged their rivals' rights to precedence over them.

The Caumonts flourished—without distinction—from 1060 to 1211, when the name Lauzun makes its first appearance on the family register. The first Lauzun and his son both bore the names of Nompar de Caumont, and after them each Lauzun used these two names after his baptismal appellation, the subject of our biography, who was born in 1633,

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 301.

being christened Antonin Nompar de Caumont. Saint-Simon is much puzzled by the appellation Nompar, which is not, he remarks, a Christian name. It pleases the family who have adopted it, he says, to consider its derivation to be Nonpareil (unequalled), but is it likely—he continues gravely—that a prefix with this meaning would be allowed by the Gascons, in a country where so many old and illustrious houses are found? Very likely, we should say, while hardly daring to differ from so great an authority as the Duc de Saint-Simon—if the earlier Nompar de Caumonts were at all like their descendant, and their neighbours yearned for a little peace and quiet.

Be that as it may, Nompar 1^o de Caumont, the first of the Lauzun family, was an important personage. He was Seigneur de Lauzun as well as of several other properties and Vicomte de Montbaheul, at a time when, as Saint-Simon says regretfully, “not the smallest license was allowed in the attribution of titles, nor the tiniest impurity of blood in those who assumed them.”

The matter of the genealogy is, however, puzzling, as in the year 1416 Jean Nompar 2^o, Seigneur de Caumont, who hardly seems to fit in with what Saint-Simon tells us of the family, but who was from his arms an ancestor of the La Force branch of the de Caumonts, wrote an instruction book for his children. He premised it with the following

naïve remarks written in quaint old French: "In the year 1416, the first day of May, I the Seigneur of Caumont, being twenty-five years old, was in a beautiful garden of flowers, where were many birds who sang delightful and gracious songs, and made me rejoice in many ways; and I began to think upon the facts of this world, how I was very apt and inclined to do evil, and that this present life was nothing compared with the other, which would last for ever.

"And then I thought of my little children, who are young and innocent and whom I wish should turn to good and honour, and should have good hearts, as a father must wish for his sons. And because, according to Nature, they must live longer than I do, and I cannot teach nor instruct them, because I shall have like others to leave the world, I thought I would make and leave for them a book of instruction to show them how, according to my ideas, they ought to govern themselves."

Nompar 2^o de Caumont has left another book, he account of his voyage to Jerusalem, in which he tells us that in a storm near Navarino the lightning set fire to the mast of his ship, but that on his making a vow to the Virgin, the fire went out, and calm was restored.

Farther on, he relates a story which his kinsman

¹ Preface to Nompar 2^o de Caumont. "Voyaige d'Oultremer," edited by the Marquis de Grange,

of Louis XIV.'s reign might have laid to heart with advantage.

"A wolf who was getting old took," he says, "his sons to the top of a high mountain and said to them, 'Look, my sons, I have up till now fed you to the best of my ability, but I am so old that I cannot get about, and you are now big enough and wise enough to manage for yourselves. One thing I advise you to avoid. If you wish to live in comfort, do not prey upon your own neighbourhood. I have followed this rule, and have therefore lived in prosperity.'"

In spite of his propensity for imparting good advice to his neighbours, Nompar 2^e de Caumont did not manage his own affairs very judiciously, as later on he forfeited his lands to Baudelis de Caumont, his younger brother, and died in voluntary exile in England in 1446.

It hardly seems necessary to follow the de Lauzuns' genealogy minutely, when once it has been noted that the subject of this biography was a member of an ancient and important family. Those who are curious about these matters can study them as given at length by Saint-Simon.¹ Suffice it to say that the first Baron de Lauzun flourished in the fourteenth century, and that in the reign of Francis I., François his grandson became gentleman of the chamber, and colonel over a

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 301.

thousand men. He continued his career as Lieutenant of the town, Château, and Conté of Blays, under Henri II., and under Charles IX. received still greater honours, as he was raised from the rank of baron to that of count. In fact he was the first distinguished man in the family.

His grandson, also a François, became Chevalier of the Order of St. Louis, Maréchal de Camp, deputy for the Agenois nobility to the States-General in 1614, and afterwards received the command of the "Cent gentilhommes de la Maison du Roi au bec-de-corbin."¹ He married the aunt of the first Maréchal de Gramont—an alliance which was useful to his grandson, whose first benefactors were the Gramont family. One of François de Lauzun's sisters became Comtesse de Gurson, and her son married the Comtesse de Fleix, lady-in-waiting to Anne of Austria. This was also a valuable alliance, and one of which Antonin Nompar de Caumont made good use, as we hear several times that he enjoyed the Queen-Mother's protection and stood high in her favour.

In 1619, François' only son Gabriel became Chevalier of the Order of St. Louis, and in his

¹ The "Compagnie des cent gentilhommes de la Maison du Roi au bec-de-corbin" was a company of a hundred men formed by Louis XI., 1474, for "la garde de son corps," and so named because they carried (amongst other arms) a peculiar hatchet. The "au bec-de-corbin" was a nickname. In 1515 this body became the 1st French Company of the Gardes du Corps.

turn commander of the "cent gentilhommes." He married Charlotte, daughter to the Duc de la Force, and so united the two branches of the family. He had a large family, five sons and four daughters.

The eldest son died young. The second was evidently not ambitious, and lived in the country till his death in 1677. The subject of this biography was the third. The fourth lived obscurely as captain of a galley, and died unmarried in 1692. The fifth, the Chevalier de Lauzun, a man of valour and wit and something of a philosopher, though, like his more famous brother, very extraordinary and difficult to live with, served for a short time in the Gendarmerie de la Garde,¹ then followed the Contis into Hungary, where he fought for the Emperor, returned to Paris disgusted with his experiences in foreign parts, and remained there, often quarrelling with his brother, though living mostly at his expense, till his death in 1707.

The family was poor. Two of the sisters became abbesses, while the other two, having no dot, married "as they could," according to Saint-Simon. The younger one became Madame de Belsunce, and owed her children's fortune to her successful brother, while the elder, who was much like Lauzun in character, and was all her life closely allied with him, became maid-of-honour to the Queen, and married in 1663 the Comte de Nogent,

¹ Part of the Household Cavalry.

who had won his right to the lady's hand by killing her other suitor in a street brawl.

The children of Gabriel and Charlotte de Lauzun no doubt had the fact that they were penniless, and must make their own way in the world, impressed upon them from their earliest youth. Fortunately for them, family feeling was strong in those days. According to Saint-Simon, who never misses an opportunity of sighing over the glories of the past, it had already begun to die out in his time, for he remarks bitterly,¹ "Then the only use of a relation was not to be sent news of a wedding, or to wear mourning to the hundredth generation, though now even the nearest seldom do more. In those days they acknowledged one another, supported one another, and even if friendship did not exist, a sense of propriety and of the world's opinion produced the same effect."

The diminution must have been gradual and have continued to our day, for nothing surprises the reader of the Memoirs of Louis XIV.'s period more than the way in which the individual was invariably and remorselessly sacrificed to the interests of the family. Daughters were ruthlessly forced into convents if there was not enough money for their dot, or if suitable husbands could not be found for them, and younger sons were put into the Church that capital might not be too much divided, but might

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 308.

serve for its legitimate use—that of ministering to the grandeur and importance of the family.

Saint-Simon gives an instance of what he evidently considers a surprising failure in duty, when the young, beautiful, and talented Duchesse de Lesdiguières refused to marry the Duke of Mantua, an old debauchée in bad health, and kept to her resolution in spite of a spirited harangue from Saint-Simon himself, on the advantages which would accrue to her family if she were to consent. Perhaps, however, even the hard, highly polished Saint-Simon felt qualms about the matter, as he remarks that if the Duke had married the woman he really wanted, he would no doubt not have kept her a complete prisoner, as he did the unfortunate lady who was in the end bold enough to become his wife.

However, in the case of the future Lauzun, now the young Marquis de Puyguilhem, the ties of relationship proved very useful, and it must be allowed to his credit that when he had raised himself they assumed a like importance in his eyes, and that he helped on the fortunes of his brothers and sisters to the best of his ability.

He was born in 1633, and was evidently looked upon as the most promising member of the family. He was therefore the one selected as being most likely to profit by the protection of his powerful relative the Maréchal de Gramont¹; and the Maréchal,

¹ The Maréchal always spelt his name with one "m,"

recognising the duty of helping his impecunious Gascon cousin, took the little Antonin when he was quite a boy, and brought him up with his own children.

The Maréchal de Gramont had been when young so enthusiastic a soldier that he had begged to be allowed to go into Holland to study the art of war ; but in 1648, when he was forty-eight years old, he seems—though he fought at the siege of Dunkirk in 1658—to have almost retired from the excitements of military life, and to have given himself up to the pleasures of the Court and of society. The Maréchal de Gramont had owed his first advancement to the great Cardinal Richelieu, and his readiness and quickness of wit can be judged from the following anecdote.¹

He had been allowed by Louis XIII. to return to France after an exile for duelling, against which the laws were severe, and on his return he went one day to see the Cardinal. To his surprise he found him clad only in a vest indulging in what we should now call physical exercises, which consisted in jumping against the wall with all his might. The situation was undignified for the Cardinal, and dangerous for the unauthorised spectator of a great man's relaxations. However, the Comte de Guiche—as he then was—showed no surprise or embarrassment, but took off his coat with alacrity, and as though

¹ Petitot, "Notice sur le Maréchal de Gramont," vol. lvi. p. 249.

the Cardinal's antics were the most natural thing in the world. "I wager," he said, "that I can jump as well as your Eminence," and he proceeded to do so. Richelieu appears to have been touched by this tactful conduct, for the Comte de Guiche became a favourite, and in 1635 was married to one of Richelieu's nieces. It was a triple wedding, two other nieces of the Minister being married at the same time, one to the Duc d'Epemon and the other to the Duc de Puylaurens; but the Gramont marriage was the only one which turned out happily.¹

During the times of the Fronde, the Maréchal was faithful to the King and Cardinal; indeed his loyalty was so firm that when the Royal Family fled from Paris in 1649, he was trusted by Mazarin with the charge of the King. He was not equally strong in questions of policy, though from the account he gives of himself in his Memoirs, he evidently considers himself a most astute and talented diplomatist. Others, however, did not estimate him at his own valuation; indeed Retz remarks in his Memoirs that the poor Maréchal de Gramont—with the best intentions in the world—was deceived by everybody, and was as ridiculous as a man of his quality could be.

At any rate he was an accomplished courtier, and it is of him that Madame de Sévigné relates

¹ Petitot, "Mémoires du Maréchal de Gramont," vol. lvi. p. 388.

an amusing misadventure in a letter to M. de Pomponne.¹

“One day Louis XIV. said to him, ‘Monsieur le Maréchal, read, I beg you, this little madrigal, and see if you have ever seen anything so silly. Because it is known that I have now begun to like poetry, they bring me all sorts.’ The Maréchal having read it, said to the King : ‘Your Majesty judges admirably about everything ; it is true that this is the most foolish and ridiculous madrigal that I have ever read.’ The King began to laugh, and said to him : ‘Is it not the case that the person who composed it is a coxcomb ?’ ‘Sir, one cannot give him another name.’ ‘Well,’ said the King, ‘I am delighted that you have spoken to me so candidly : it is I who composed it.’ ‘Ah, Sir ! what treachery ! I beg your Majesty to give it back to me—I read it hurriedly.’ ‘No, M. le Maréchal : first impressions are always best.’ The King,” adds Madame de Sévigné, “laughed tremendously at this silly joke, but everybody thinks that it was a cruel small-minded thing to do to an old courtier.”

One man alone at Court had gained an ascendancy over Lauzun, and that was the old Comte de Gramont, the disreputable hero of Hamilton’s *Mémoires*, who laughed at him, called him “petit Lauzun,” and told stories even in the King’s presence which put him in an odious or ridiculous

¹ Letter, December 1, 1664.

light.¹ To every one's surprise, when attacked by the malicious old gentleman, the susceptible and hot-headed Lauzun never showed anger, but generally took refuge in flight. The little man behaved with the same forbearance to all the Gramont family ; they were his kinsmen, and he never forgot what they had done for him in his youth—perhaps, too, never forgot the passionate love he had felt for one of the family.

He was brought up with the Maréchal's four children as though he were their brother. He was seven or eight years older than the eldest, the Comte de Guiche, who was handsome, gallant, and brave, but so vain and affected that these defects spoilt all his good qualities. We shall come across him later as the lover of the ill-fated Henriette D'Angleterre, the first wife of Monsieur, Louis XIV.'s only brother. The younger son, who became Duc de Gramont after his father's death, was, according to Saint-Simon, cowardly, mean, and of indifferent character. The elder daughter, who loved and was beloved by Lauzun, became Duchesse de Valentinois, and later Princesse de Monaco, while the younger married the Marquis de Raffetot and entered a convent when she became a widow.

We know nothing of the way in which Lauzun's education was conducted, except that the Grande

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 333.

32 Lauzun: Courtier and Adventurer

Mademoiselle tells us in her *Memoirs*¹ that from the age of fourteen he only went to school in the winter that he might not miss the summer campaigns with the dragoons, among whom he distinguished himself even at that early age. At that period, as Madame Arvède Barine points out,² the great object of a boy's education was to make him a man as quickly as possible. The days when it was considered correct for a nobleman to know nothing were passing away rapidly. The great Condé went to classes and to the Paris Academy like an ordinary boy, talked Latin at seven years old, and at eleven was studying philosophy. The road to learning was not made easy in those days. Parliament indeed interfered to protect a scholar's life if threatened by the violence of his master's castigations, and public opinion had advanced a little since the thirteenth century, when a learned lawyer expressed the opinion that it was better to lose a child under the rod than to allow him, through the weakness of his masters, to be condemned to a useless or blameworthy existence; still, punishments were extremely severe, and a boy's schooldays cannot generally have been a happy time to look back upon.

Lauzun could read and write, but after Made-

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," édit. Chéruef, vol. iv. p. 38.

² Arvède Barine, "La Jeunesse de la Grande Mademoiselle," p. 26.

moiselle de Montpensier's information we are not surprised to hear from Saint-Simon that he was without letters or ornaments of the mind, for his education was evidently conducted on old-fashioned principles, and bodily accomplishments were considered of more account than mental acquirements. His elder brother being quiet and unambitious, Antonin was intended by his guardians to take his place, and to be the military man of the family ; and with this end in view, riding, shooting, fencing, and fighting were of more importance than grammar or arithmetic. We hear that he was noted for adroitness in bodily exercises, and rode an untrained horse when he was eighty-nine years old, so we may judge that he profited by these lessons. Other instruction, too, he drank in with avidity. Before the centralising policy of Louis XIV. had destroyed all courts but his own, before the Fronde had broken up the power of the great nobles, many of the great people were centres round which revolved a gay and lively assemblage, and the court of the Maréchal de Gramont was among the most brilliant of the number. The old Maréchal was one of the greatest ladykillers in a court where this graceful accomplishment was most highly valued, and early did Lauzun begin to practise himself in this art. This was not a mere amusement, for female protection and favour were of the utmost use to a penniless ambitious youth, who aimed at

making his way along the slippery, intricate pathway of court life, and at reaching the dazzling goal of the monarch's favour, with its attendant advantages of riches and honours. Physically, nature might not seem to have equipped the young Marquis bountifully for the part, for, according to his future brother-in-law Saint-Simon, he was ugly and insignificant, his fine eyes constituting his only claim to good looks, while his stature was so tiny that he was almost a dwarf. Beauty, however, does not generally prove so high a passport to the favour of the so-called fair sex as wit and cleverness, and these qualifications the little Gascon possessed to perfection.

His powers of repartee were unrivalled, while his quickness of mind, the dash, keenness, and intense life which animated his lithe, active body, his intense self-confidence and power of imparting his own opinion of himself to others, all made him a being apart.

The sombre moods in which he shut himself away from his fellow men, the black rages in which he seemed almost insane, were of later growth—born to a great extent of the despair and solitude of those ten years' imprisonment, when life seemed over for him, and when he agonised and implored in vain for liberty.

In the days, however, of which we are speaking, when the world was before the little Gascon, when

he worked with tireless energy, planned, contrived, intrigued, and laid careful foundations on which the beautiful edifice of a successful career was to be raised, he was no doubt a much gayer person than the Lauzun presented to us as an extraordinary and puzzling enigma by Saint-Simon.

Everything, in his youth, seemed ready to his hand. His powers of feigning simplicity and innocence about what was passing around him, while in reality nothing escaped his quick eyes, seemed to fit him for a high post in diplomacy; while his quickness, resource, and bravery appeared to destine him for the career of a successful soldier, perhaps even of a *Maréchal de France*.

There was a tinge of servility, too, running through all his qualities, which did not augur badly for his success at a time when the only road to greatness was the favour of a despotic, egotistical young monarch. Quite in the background—an as yet unsuspected danger—lurked the passionate, proud, vindictive temper, which was time after time to make havoc of glorious opportunities, and to spoil arrangements it had taken the utmost tact and cleverness to contrive. Lauzun did not bask in the sunshine of the playtime of youth,—he was too eager, restless, and ambitious for that,—but he must have enjoyed to the full its heritage of endless and glorious possibilities.

When we first hear of Lauzun as engaged in

the active work of life, the almost ceaseless war with Spain was going on, and as a consequence of the civil wars of the Fronde, in which Condé had fought against the Court, or, as the Comte de Gramont neatly phrased it when speaking to Louis XIV.—“for the King against the Cardinal”—the greatest French general of the time was now fighting for Spain against his own country. Turenne led the French army, and Turenne was first cousin to Puyguilhem’s father. He was a most useful relation, though it does not appear that he favoured his young kinsman unduly.

The first glimpse we have of Lauzun shows him in the thick of the contest, where we hear of him falling ill during one of the long marches which Turenne introduced as a new feature in warfare, and on another occasion leading his troops at the steady trot which was then considered a dashing pace for a cavalry charge.

In 1654, he had received the appointment of cornet to the regiment commanded by the Maréchal de Gramont, and in 1658 we find him promoted to the post of colonel to the Dragons Étrangers.¹

In 1655, Bussy-Rabutin records an instance which proves Lauzun’s bravery—though perhaps not his discretion.² He was serving under the

¹ Probably Dragons Étrangers du Cardinal, a regiment raised in 1645, broken up 1661.

² Lalanne, “Mémoires de Bussy-Rabutin,” vol. i. p. 443.

Duke of York, afterwards James II., who was anxious to fit himself for assisting the cause of his brother in the future, and was therefore acting as a volunteer under Turenne.¹ The army was encamped before the town of Mons, and Lauzun, with several other officers and volunteers, advanced quite close to the enemy's outposts. Bussy-Rabutin—who among his many accomplishments counted that of being an experienced soldier—begged the Duke of York to dispatch a messenger to call them back, as their position was dangerous; and the unfortunate Chevalier de Saint-Gé, who was sent on this duty, had his leg broken by a shot from the enemy, and died the next day from the effects of the fracture.

We hear again of the little man's bravery in 1658,² when, in spite of Condé's efforts on behalf of the Spaniards, Dunkirk had capitulated to the united French and English troops. After the fall of Dunkirk, Turenne had crossed the Scheldt, and had posted some dragoons, under the command of Puyguilhem, in a village to protect the town of Tournai. The dragoons were hardly in position when Condé dispatched three regiments of cavalry under M. Chamili to the rescue of Tournai. However, "M. de Peguilain,"—as Turenne calls his young

¹ Michaud, "Mémoires du Duc d'York," Poujoulat coll., ser. iii., vol. iii. p. 535.

² *Idem*, "Mémoires de Turenne," Poujoulat coll., ser. iii., vol. iii. p. 500.

38 Lauzun: Courtier and Adventurer

relation—was quite equal to the occasion, and, holding fast to his position, put the enemy's troops to flight, with the result that M. de Chamili and half his men were taken prisoners. "M. de Peguillin did very well," says Turenne in a dispatch to Mazarin, this time spelling his relation's name without an "a." There is a pleasing vagueness about both the appellations appertaining to our hero, for in the various Memoirs of the time the name by which he is most generally known is sometimes spelt "Lausun" and sometimes "Lauzun." A word about this seems necessary, as otherwise the two names are puzzling.

During the early part of his career, when his father and elder brother were alive, the subject of this biography was known as the Marquis de Puyguilhem, and at Court as Peguillin—a corruption of this. However, in 1669, as the property of Puyguilhem had been sold, and his elder brother was delicate and never came to Court, he began to call himself by his father's name of Lauzun.¹

In this account of him, however, he will generally be known as Lauzun to avoid confusion, and because this is the name under which he obtained notoriety.

Turenne thought so highly of Lauzun's military talent that he selected him for the command of Furnes—a flattering distinction, as there were many promising young men to choose from, and, being

¹ Chéruef, "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 71.

an unfortified town in a hostile country, Furnes was a difficult post to hold. Many were envious of the position accorded to him, and among the malcontents was the commander of the marines, who considered that the post should have been granted to him, and refused to serve under Lauzun's orders.¹ The latter, however, was firm about the matter, and had an interview with the malcontent, to whom he said that he had never thought of doing him injustice, and had not asked for the command, but that as it had been given him he must call upon him to obey, and if he refused, must make him do so. As the other still hesitated, Lauzun promptly imprisoned him and all who sided with him. When this action came to the King's ears he was much pleased with it.

We come across one other mention of Lauzun in these early days. It is one which connects him with the walk of life in which he would in the future particularly distinguish himself, and it is highly characteristic. In 1658, there was terrible dismay throughout France, for Louis XIV.—then a young man of twenty—caught fever while he was inspecting the troops at Dunkirk, became dangerously ill, and was believed to be dying. The despised yet feared Monsieur, Duc d'Orléans, was the next heir.

¹ This story is only given in the older editions of the "Montpensier Mémoires."

The Queen and Mazarin had been so terribly afraid that Monsieur would follow in the steps of his uncle, Gaston d'Orléans, who kept the kingdom in a ferment by his continual conspiracies against his brother Louis XIII., that they had dressed him as a child in girl's clothes, and had punished him whenever in his games he had presumed to disagree with his brother. He was now a youth of eighteen, and was extraordinarily childish, delighting in jewelry and fine clothes, and finding his principal amusement in playing with the Queen's maids-of-honour, and in arraying them in elegant costumes.

Monsieur had his own set of friends, Anne de Gonzague Princess Palatine, Madame de Fiennes, Madame de Choisy, de Guiche, Vardes, and the Chevalier de Lorraine being his favourite associates, and with them Peguillin was closely allied. The Cardinal Mazarin had done nothing to conciliate Monsieur or his coterie. If the dreaded and only too likely catastrophe were to take place and the country were to lose its king, it seemed probable that the astute Italian had only surmounted the troubles of the Fronde to be obliged again to return into exile. The prospect was maddening, and the Queen was hardly less agitated than her adviser, for the tie between them—whether cemented or not by a secret marriage—was certainly very close. Some one of Monsieur's set must be conciliated and be persuaded to use his influence on

behalf of Mazarin, and Guiche was the person selected for this office ; but feeling he would soon have the game in his own hands, he received the overture coldly.

At this juncture Peguillin added fuel to the flame in the manner peculiar to him. With the object of increasing his own importance as the possessor of secret intelligence, he informed the nervous and agitated Cardinal—no doubt with expressions of the most sincere sympathy—that he would certainly be arrested an hour after the King's death.

However, Monsieur, when interviewed by the Queen and Cardinal, wept so bitterly at the idea of his brother's danger, that his mother was touched, and henceforth loved him better than she had ever done before. He did what was even more satisfactory : he promised, in the event of his accession to the throne, to show the same friendship for Mazarin that Louis had done, and the crisis was brought happily to an end by the unexpected recovery of the King, followed by the exile of one or two of Monsieur's partisans, who had shown their hands too plainly for prudence during the monarch's illness.

CHAPTER III

Life at Court—Louis XIV.'s youth—Lessons of the Fronde—The King's dislike of Paris—Anne of Austria—Complications caused by the presence of the exiled Stuarts at the Court—Surprise of the Grande Mademoiselle after her exile at the want of ceremonial at Court—Character and appearance of the Grande Mademoiselle—Her life before she met Lauzun.

IN 1655, Lauzun was first brought into contact with the King by his father's resignation to him of the post of commander of the "Cent gentilhommes de la Maison du Roi au bec-de-corbin," and he took up the work of his life—that of making his way at Court—with energy and alacrity.

His sister, Mademoiselle de Lauzun, was most useful to him, her talent for intrigue being as great as his, though her personality was less extraordinary.

The Maréchal de Gramont, too, was a powerful protector, for he was held in much consideration at Court, and was in the confidence of the Queen-mother and of Mazarin, who fully appreciated his loyalty, though they sometimes laughed at his simplicity and vanity, and made him their dupe. He commanded the regiment of Guards, and his son, the Comte de Guiche, was high in favour with

the King and also with the Comtesse de Soissons, with whom Louis XIV. spent most of his time, and who was practically the Queen of the Court.¹

The Comte de Guiche introduced Puyguilhem into this gay society, and he insinuated himself into the King's favour by means of the Comte de Lude, who was First Gentleman of the Chamber, as well as Governor of Saint-Germains and of Versailles.

Here were the tools to hand by which, in the intervals of fighting for his Sovereign and country, the penniless adventurer was to carve out his fortune. Money must have been his first necessity, but in that gay society there were many indirect means by which this might be obtained. Ladies' favour was a frequent means of making one's fortune, and such was Lauzun's skill in attracting the fair sex to himself that "the most beautiful and highborn tore him from each other, overwhelmed him with presents and advances, overcame the indifference by means of which he drew them after him, put up with his bad tempers, his jealousies, his passionate outbursts, infidelities, and the great peril of becoming permanently embroiled with him."²

High play, with a little adroit shuffling of the cards, such as was openly practised by Lauzun's

¹ Chéruei, "Mémoires de Saint-Simon," vol. xix. p. 170.

² Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 308.

kinsman the Comte de Gramont, was another easy method of providing for pecuniary necessities.

Many were the fashionable games of hazard : such as *bête*, *lansquenet*, *ombre*, *bassette*, *portique*, *hoca*, *trou-madame* ; and large fortunes were won and lost at them. In 1678, Saint-Pouange wrote to tell Louvois that “M. de Langlée, who cut, lost the day before yesterday 2,700 pistoles, of which Madame de Montespan and Madame la Comtesse de Soissons won a great part.”¹ A pistole was worth about two pounds of our money, so this was a very considerable sum. Madame de Montespan was an inveterate gambler, and losses of 100,000 crowns were common when she was playing.

This was at rather a later date, but the same thing—only with not quite such extravagant stakes—was going on at the time when Lauzun first looked round to see how he could best make his fortune out of the materials ready to his hand. One of the facts that most struck the Grande Mademoiselle when she returned to Court in 1657, after her exile at Saint-Fargeau, was the fact that her aunt, Anne of Austria, had taken to playing cards. “I said to her, ‘No change is equal to that of seeing your Majesty play cards every day, and my father not play at all.’”² In his exile at Blois, the Duc d’Orléans had time to attend to his religious duties, and

¹ “*Histoire de Louvois*,” by M. Rousset, vol. ii. p. 495.

² Chéruel, “*Montpensier Mémoires*,” vol. iii. p. 123.

his confessor evidently did not permit the dissipation of gambling.

The Grande Mademoiselle found herself in a changed world—and one to which she found it difficult to accustom herself—when she returned to the Court after a six years' exile, which had begun when Louis XIV. was a boy of fourteen. Lauzun, however, was not confused by comparisons and was intensely adaptable, his one object being to use the people and things around him for his own advantage. He was a silent man, only occasionally giving rein to a gay and amusing humour, a student of men who managed to keep his real personality a mystery, while he posed for his own purposes as the most gentle, simple, amiable creature imaginable.

The great object of his study was no doubt the man on whom his fortune and fate depended—his royal master; and in time he knew him so thoroughly and gained so great an ascendancy over him, that he forced him to a course of action which was, considering the circumstances, truly amazing.

Louis XIV. would at that time have repaid the study of any student of mankind, for at the age of twenty he was an enigma to those around him. He was silent and retiring, but, as Madame de Motteville says, his timidity proceeded in a great measure from his pride and judgment, which “made

him wish to be perfect in everything and fear to be found wanting.”¹

He had received a very poor education as far as book learning went. Anne of Austria was a good mother according to her lights, and she was specially devoted to her eldest son, but she was occupied with the cares of the State, and was besides extremely indolent, with the result that when the King and his brother were not actually in her presence they were left to play with the housemaid's child, or to wander into the kitchen, where they stole morsels of whatever was being cooked.²

Later on, when Louis was taken away from his governesses and was given into the charge of men, he did not at first approve of the change, for he wanted stories of fairies and of Jeanne d'Arc to be told him when he was in bed. However, he had a governor and a tutor, but, whether because the troubles of the Fronde occupied the mind of Mazarin to the exclusion of everything else, or whether because, as his enemies hint, he wished to be the all-powerful Minister of a feeble King, Louis' education was still neglected.

Hatred of Mazarin was inculcated by those around him, and Louis' valet, La Porte, relates with pleasure that—as a result, no doubt, of his influence—when the King saw Mazarin he would

¹ Petitot, “Motteville Mémoires,” vol. iii. p. 381.

² Geoffroy, “Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.”

say, "There goes the Grand Turk."¹ But statecraft, history, and diplomacy were untaught, or taught haphazard, and the King till the end of his life spoke with bitterness of his neglected education. It had serious consequences, for his absolute ignorance on certain points—religion, unfortunately, being amongst them—was so intense that he was completely in the hands of the people who surrounded him. Monsieur's second wife speaks thus of her brother-in-law: "The late King knew nothing at all of the Scriptures. He thought me learned because I knew a little about them. This always seemed to me amusing. If he would have read, he might have known them, but he hated reading. He did not know a word about the differences between religions. The confessor said to him, 'Those who are not Catholics are heretics; they are damned,' and he believed without reasoning further."²

Possibly the dragonnades and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes are partly explained by these words, for Louis XIV., though hard, was not naturally cruel.

As a contrast to this testimony, it may be as well to give that of an eye-witness, who wrote after the King's death, when adulation could confer no

¹ "La Porte Mémoires," Michaud and Poujoulat coll., ser. ii., vol. viii. p. 45.

² "Correspondance de Madame Duchesse d'Orléans," vol. ii. p. 275.

advantages, "He talked justly, expressed himself nobly ; and his least prepared answers contained, in a few words, all that it was best to say, according to the time, things, and persons. . . . Never in a hurry to speak, he examined, penetrated characters and thoughts ; but as he was wise, and knew how the words spoken by kings are weighed, he kept to himself very often what his penetration had discovered. If the question was of important things, the cleverest and most enlightened were astonished by his knowledge, persuaded that he knew more than they did, and charmed with the manner in which he expressed himself. If it were necessary to trifle, to jest, if he deigned to tell a story, it was with infinite grace, with a noble and subtle turn, that I have seen in no one but him."¹

The lady who spoke thus was not a favourite with Louis—in fact he disliked her ; so she may be credited with impartiality, and her evidence accorded like value with that of the Duchesse d'Orléans, whose indignation must have been bitter when she saw her detested Maintenon in power, her own province—which she loved dearly—ravaged by Louis' troops, and the followers of the religion professed by her friends and relations subjected to cruel persecution.

Louis was not luxuriously brought up, and at the time of the Fronde he fared badly. His dressing-

¹ "Souvenirs de Madame de Caylus," p. 105.

gown was three years old, and only came half-way down his legs, while his sheets were so full of holes that his feet went through them. He was stinted, too, in money, and nearly cried one day because Mazarin had taken away from him a present he had been given.¹

The Minister does not appear to have taken much trouble to attach the young monarch to himself, but he no doubt hoped to follow in the footsteps of his great predecessor Richelieu, and to be so great a man that he would be able to govern without much reference to the ostensible ruler.

Meanwhile the timid, silent boy was receiving impressions which would influence his whole life. Foremost among these was a dread of that all-powerful force the First Minister, and a determination that the supreme authority should be vested in himself, and that each Minister should refer the affairs of his particular department to his royal master without consultation with the rest of the Council. This would entail strenuous work for the Sovereign, but Louis was determined to take his office seriously.

The personal history of the first few years of his life seems the record of continual ballets—in which the King figured with becoming gravity before the whole Court ; of balls and gaieties, and

¹ "La Porte Mémoires," Michaud and Poujoulat coll., ser. iii., vol. viii., p. 50.

50 Lauzun: Courtier and Adventurer

of a truly bewildering succession of love-affairs. But co-existent with this frivolous side of his life were hours of steady work when he studied to make up the deficiencies of his neglected education, and to master the mysteries of his business as ruler.

A deep impression was left on the mind of the King by the events of 1648, 1649, and 1650, by the alarming fact that the royal authority could be set at naught with impunity, and by the alarms and anxiety of the Court, and the barricades and turbulence in the streets. The Parliament, too, sent deputations with demands which were, according to Queen and Court, unreasonable in matter and insolent in manner, and to which the Queen made answer with Austrian arrogance, and in the shrill head-voice which she only used in moments of exasperation.

No doubt Louis heard much from those who surrounded him of the impertinence of the rabble who dared thus to defy the royal authority, and felt his boyish dignity outraged by the flight by night from Paris and the comfortless arrival at Saint-Germains. Supplies could not be obtained for some days, for the Parisians were indignant at the departure of the Court and Royal Family, and refused to allow anything intended for their use to leave the city.

A climax was reached in 1652, when the Grande Mademoiselle turned the cannon of the Bastille

against the royal troops. Louis never forgave the rebellion of his capital. He disliked Paris, as he felt insecure there, and this timidity was fostered by certain wily courtiers, who made capital out of the King's nervousness.

Lauzun was specially adroit at currying favour by the discovery of imaginary plots,¹ and a service of secret police, with a most elaborate system of opening letters, was considered necessary for the King's safety.

Later on, the Guards were set to watch every one, even in the private rooms at Versailles, and one of the courtiers who called attention to a precaution which should have been allowed to pass unnoticed, was terrified by a most rare sight—the King in a passion.²

This was, however, many years later, and the Louis we are considering now was in many ways a very different creature from the hidebound, automaton-like autocrat described by Saint-Simon.

Versailles in reality owed its existence to the Fronde, for it was the King's dislike of his capital which made him sink many millions in transforming Louis XIII.'s hunting lodge into a huge edifice—in reality a town in a single building—where the whole Court could be luxuriously lodged.

Another effect of the Fronde was Louis' dread

¹ Chéruel, "Saint-Simon Mémoires," vol. xii. p. 66.

² "Saint Simon Mémoires," vol. viii. p. 206.

of the influence of the nobility, and his determination to level their power. He, and he alone, was to hold the reins of government. He shuddered when he remembered the time when the great Condé, his brother Conti, Madame de Longueville, Gaston, duc d'Orléans, and his daughter the Grande Mademoiselle, defied the power of the throne, each dictated his or her own terms to the Queen-Regent, and insisted that Mazarin must be exiled.

Louis did not intend eventually to have a First Minister, but if he did in the future will this or any other measure, no class of his subjects should—he resolved—be strong enough to thwart him.

In a youth of spirit these resolutions are not surprising ; what *is* astonishing, however, is the self-control shown by Louis in not divulging his intentions till the time was ripe for their fulfilment. Possibly he inherited powers of dissimulation from his mother, for Anne of Austria could deceive every one around her with ease, and apparently without a qualm. She showed this in a striking manner when the Fronde was raging and she allowed her most intimate friends to believe that she was remaining in Paris, after all her preparations for flight had been made, and they were to be deserted and were to take their chance of safety.

Though the comment might be priggish, there was something remarkable about the boy of seventeen who, when asked by his brother what he thought

of a play he had just seen, said, "Don't you know that I never judge what I do not understand."¹

At the age of twenty, Louis XIV. was a handsome though rather heavy-looking young man with a dark moustache, rather small eyes, an aquiline nose, regular features, and a good figure.

His mother, Anne of Austria, watched over him at this time with anxious solicitude. He was her favourite child, though he does not appear to have felt for her the same passionate adoration as did her younger son—whose affection for his mother and brother seem the only bright spots in an otherwise despicable character.

Anne of Austria's declining years were not happy, though she lived to see her son married to the Infanta, so that the great wish of her heart was fulfilled. Her personality—though estimable—was ineffective; she possessed no power of exercising influence.

The Cardinal, for whom she had sacrificed everything and to whom she was in all probability secretly married, set her authority at nought, and in moments of irritation treated her like a waiting-maid. Louis XIV. was at first extremely docile, and was certainly very fond of his mother, but before her death he was beginning to weary of her admonitions, and she had little power over him.

Occasionally she appears to have been a little

¹ "Segraisiana," p. 187.

tactless, and to have behaved in a manner which must have been decidedly trying to the young King's dignity. In 1655, when he was seventeen years old, she gave a little party to show off his dancing, and to amuse the English Princess Henriette. Louis, who, after Henriette's marriage with his brother, became one of her most devoted friends, did not, at the age of seventeen, care for the little eleven-year-old cousin, and instead of leading her out to dance, went up to Madame de Mercœur, one of Cardinal Mazarin's nieces. To quote from Madame de Motteville,¹ who tells the story, "The Queen, surprised at this mistake, got up hastily from her chair, went over to take him away from Madame de Mercœur, and told him in a whisper to ask the English Princess to dance. The Queen of England (Henrietta Maria), seeing the Queen's anger, ran after her and said to her in a low voice that she begged her not to coerce the King; that her daughter had hurt her foot and could not dance. The Queen (who was evidently extremely angry) replied that if the Princess did not dance, neither should the King. So, not to cause confusion, the Queen of England allowed her daughter to dance, and was in her heart annoyed with the King. He was again scolded in private by his mother in the evening, and replied that he did not like little girls."

¹ "Motteville Mémoires," Petitot coll., vol. xxxix. p. 370.



ANNE D'AUTRICHE ROYNE REGENTE
DE FRANCE ET DE NAVARRE

DESIGNÉE PAR LE ROI

ANNE OF AUSTRIA, QUEEN-REGENT OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE.

Later on—when her anger had evaporated—Anne of Austria felt that it had been injudicious to rebuke the King before witnesses, and remarked that she had been too hasty with such a good son, but that she had been so horrified at his want of courtesy to the English Princess that she had not been able to contain herself.

The presence at the French Court of the exiled Stuarts—first, of Henrietta Maria and her daughter ; the Prince of Wales—afterwards Charles II.—and the Duke of York, who became James II. ; and later, of James II., Mary of Modena, and the Pretender—caused many complications ; and the Grande Mademoiselle, who was daughter to Gaston d'Orléans, Louis XIII.'s only brother, and therefore first cousin to Louis XIV. and niece to Henrietta Maria, did not appreciate having to allow precedence to her English cousin. She was accused of having passed in front of her one day, and Monsieur, who was apparently paying his court to the heiress in a half-hearted fashion, said indignantly, " Well, if she *did* do it, wouldn't she be right ? It is rather too much of a good thing if these people, to whom we give bread, take precedence over us ! Why don't they go somewhere else ? " ¹

When this speech was repeated to her by some busybody, poor Henrietta Maria wept ; and the Queen, who certainly had hard work with both her

¹ Chéruel, " Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iii. p. 206

sons, scolded Monsieur, saying, "Being what they are, it is nice of you to say that !"

However, before long the despised little Princess managed to make her own way, and became the darling of the Court.

It is curious, to any one who pictures Louis XIV. as depicted by Saint-Simon, to hear of the surprise of the Grande Mademoiselle at the familiarity permitted towards him.

She relates how at a ball given by Madame la Maréchale de l'Hôpital, there was at the supper table only one chair with arms. "The King said to me," relates Mademoiselle,¹ "'Sit there, Cousin ; that is your place.' I laughed at this as a joke. He said to me, 'But who *will* go there ?' The Countess of Soissons said, laughing, 'I will !' and went towards it. Monsieur said to her, 'Don't sit there.' This familiarity with the King astonished me ; no one would have shown as much when I went away. Every one took their places at the table. The King sat down last, saying, 'As this is the only place left, I must take it.' He never helped himself to a dish without asking whether any one would have some, and people were helped at the same time with him. To one who had been brought up with ideas of the greatest respect, this was astonishing ; and it was long before I could accustom myself to it."

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iii, p. 199.

It is easy to imagine that the Grande Mademoiselle, a woman of thirty, who had begun life early—as every one did in those days, and was by nature extremely conservative—was bewildered when brought into contact with these young people—gay, frivolous, and utterly without morals. We can realise her position sympathetically, as she tried in a clumsy way to be young, and to join in the gaieties with the rest, that she might be a suitable wife for the childish and feeble-minded Monsieur who was twelve years her junior, and afraid of her.

She was in all things different from the people around her, a survival from an older state of things,—as Madame Arvède Barine tells us in her fascinating books,¹—and owing to her peculiar idiosyncrasies she often became an object of ridicule.

She was obstinately and for ever young. "Thank Heaven! the Grande Mademoiselle has at last left off dancing!" cries Madame de Sévigné; but her refusal to grow old did not spring from coquetry, but from a belief that a person of her quality did not age like the rank and file of her humbler sisters—if sisters they could be called. This is, after all, not an altogether astonishing opinion for a lady who considered the intentions of the Great to be like the mysteries of Faith,² so that

¹ Arvède Barine, "La Jeunesse de la Grande Mademoiselle" and "Louis XIV. et la Grande Mademoiselle."

² Chéruel, "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. ii. p. 22.

they must be received with due humility and without questioning. In spite of the servile adulation poured on Louis XIV., these ideas were a little out of fashion.

There was another difference between her and most of the Court. She was strictly moral in her life, and she had never even been in love; in fact she despised the tender passion so thoroughly that she dismissed one of her ladies-in-waiting merely because she had married for love. The poor Grande Mademoiselle! She little knew the fearful havoc that mischievous god Cupid would in the future make of her life, or realised that it would be possible for one of her own servants to say to her on this very subject, "You are the opprobrium and laughing-stock of all Europe!"¹ So often are we most easily assailed on what we consider our strongest point.

At the age of thirty she was a tall, fair woman, rather rawboned and awkward, with hair already turning grey, and a complexion slightly inclined to redness. She was serenely indifferent and superior to the lovemaking which was the principal occupation of the people around her. Much of it she did not see, for she never guessed anything, or strained her ears to catch a whisper; indeed, when once her mind contained a preconceived notion which was contrary to the facts of the case, it was

¹ "Sagraisiana," p. 78,

necessary to shout very loud, and very often, if you wished to enlighten her.

The greatness of her position filled her mind to the exclusion of many other subjects; and this was natural, for Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, Duchesse de Montpensier, sole heritor through her mother of the sovereignty of Dombes, the principality of Roche-sur-Yon, of the duchies of Montpensier, Châtellerault, and of Saint-Fargeau, was a person of enormous importance. Her position was unique. She possessed an income of 330,000 livres,¹ and but for the Salic law, when she was born on May 19, 1627, she would have been heir to the French throne.

Her father married again and had several daughters, but except for the money he could filch from her by fraud or indirect force, this made no difference to the position or the riches of the Grande Mademoiselle. Her money and her estates were her own, and, subject to royal approval, she could do with them what she pleased. She grew up with the idea that of course she would marry, but with absolute indifference as to what the man should be like as long as the position were sufficiently splendid for her deserts. This was her theory, but her practice was not quite so cold-blooded, for she refused to marry the depraved

¹ Arvède Barine, "La Jeunesse de la Grande Mademoiselle," p. 17.

and unhealthy King of Portugal, and was exiled in consequence. This event, however, took place much later. As a girl she was strictly impartial about the persons of her suitors, though she weighed their worldly advantages very carefully in the balance.

The Comte de Soissons, one of her mother's old admirers, was the first aspirant for her hand, and her 'second—according to her own account—was Anne of Austria's brother, the Cardinal Infant of Toledo ; but both these admirers of herself or her money died.

The exiled Prince of Wales, afterwards Charles II., was a very genuine suitor ; but the Grande Mademoiselle found him extremely dull and shy, and though any defects in his personality did not count for much in the question, the fact that if she were to marry him she would most likely be obliged to sell all her property, to help him to get back his kingdom, was an insuperable obstacle to taking him as husband. Therefore, to his mother's and his own intense disappointment,—the Grande Mademoiselle was handsome in her youth,—he was repulsed by the haughty heiress.

In after-years Charles had the satisfaction of turning the tables on her, for when he was King of England she would gladly have married him, and he showed the greatest possible disgust when she was mentioned to him as a possible wife. The

idea of espousing the Emperor and of taking precedence of every woman in Europe was her favourite chimera, and after the Emperor—left a widower—had disappointed her by marrying some one else, she consoled herself by speculating on the probability that the new Empress would die during her confinement. This actually happened, and shortly afterwards a violent scene took place between her, her father, and her aunt, with Mazarin as an amused spectator, when she was accused of employing an emissary to treat with the Emperor on the subject. The Grande Mademoiselle defended herself well, and accused her father, with some apparent justice, of not caring for her interests. The truth was that she was so great an heiress, and possessed so much property in France, that the arrangement of her marriage was a delicate matter, and raised the question of many conflicting interests. Her father, for instance, thought of himself and of his second family, to whose advantage it was that their step-sister should remain unmarried.

After the first Fronde, Mazarin's terror at the prospect that Gaston of Orléans and the great Condé should unite their forces against him, caused him—in spite of the reluctance of the Queen and of the young King himself—to favour the Grande Mademoiselle's project of marrying Louis XIV. Mademoiselle, however, at this junc-

ture acted with her usual want of judgment, and instead of promising the Cardinal that she would use her influence with her father on his behalf, and of receiving with diplomacy the advances of Madame de Choisy and of the Princess Palatine, who promised to make her Queen in return for considerable and carefully specified pecuniary advantages, she determined to manage the affair herself.

The course she took to attain her most cherished wish was, to say the least of it, odd and injudicious. She determined that she would show the King her popularity and importance by raising his kingdom against him, so that he should marry her as the price of peace. She was extremely popular in Paris, where she was treated almost like a Queen, and when she turned the Bastille cannon on the royal troops outside the city, it must have been the proudest and happiest day of her life.

Another project was going on in her mind at the same time. The great Condé disliked his wife, and, united, he and the Grande Mademoiselle might have attained to unheard-of heights. The unfortunate Princess of Condé was dangerously ill about this time. There was said to be no hope of her recovery, and the Grande Mademoiselle and Condé walked together every day in Renard's garden—a fashionable resort of the time—and were strangely silent and embarrassed, for the same

thought was in both their minds, and they knew that every one was watching them. However, the Princess rallied, the Fronde collapsed, the King and Court returned to Paris, the Grande Mademoiselle was exiled for six years, and when she returned in 1658, found the King—a young man of twenty—presiding over a Court which was much changed since she had last seen it.

CHAPTER IV

The Court and Mazarin's nieces—Madame de Soissons—Aspirants for the position of Queen of France—Marie de Mancini—Question of the King's marriage with the Princess Marguerite of Savoy.

DURING the first few years of Louis XIV.'s reign Mazarin's nieces were the most important people at the Court, which was continually surprised, amused, scandalised, and at the same time dominated by them.

Much of the excitement they caused was, no doubt, due to their uncle's position of almost absolute power ; but independently of this, there is no doubt that these little Italians, not all of them beautiful, and one or two positively ugly, wielded a strange magnetic influence, which gave them an extraordinary preponderance over the minds of others. This fascination seemed independent of their moral qualities, which ranged from those of the Princesse de Conti, sweet, amiable, devoted to her husband, to the Comtesse de Soissons, heartless, dissipated, and in all probability a murderess.

The Cardinal had two sisters, Madame de Martinozzi and Madame de Mancini.

Madame de Martinozzi's daughters and the two elder Mancinis were, as children, sent to France to be educated. Madame de Motteville gives an account¹ of the arrival of the four little Italian girls, of the kindness shown them by Anne of Austria, and of the apparent indifference of the Cardinal, who, nevertheless, was keenly interested in his nieces, as he had determined that the important alliances they were to make in the future should firmly consolidate his power in France. So great was the interest taken in the children that when first they appeared they were mobbed by a crowd of eager courtiers, all anxious to catch a glimpse of them.

The two Martinozzi nieces made great matches, one of them becoming, in 1653, Princesse de Conti, and the other marrying the Duke of Modena, after which, their mother's responsibility with regard to them being at an end, she returned to Italy, while Madame de Mancini stayed in France till her death in 1656. Her daughters did not resemble her, for she lived a retired life and was completely occupied with the care of her family. She died in a condition of great piety, and was much regretted by the Cardinal, into whose hands she committed her son and daughters. She begged him to make a nun of her third daughter Marie, for the strange reason that she appeared to her to have a bad

¹ "Motteville Mémoires," vol. i. p. 270.

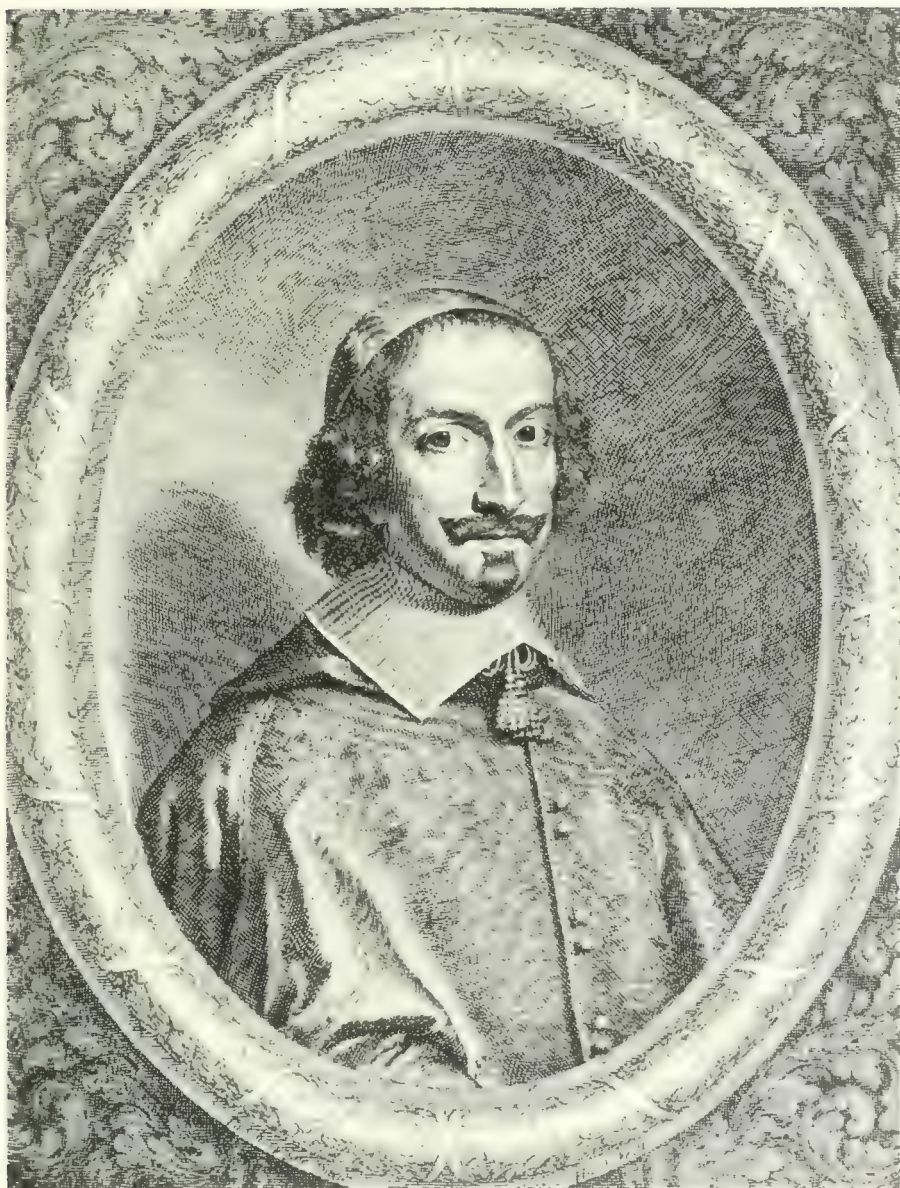
disposition, and that the late Monsieur de Mancini—who was a great astrologer—had foretold that she would be the cause of many evils.

In this Madame de Mancini was mistaken. It was not the stormy, passionate Marie—who at least possessed a heart—but Olympe, who was cursed with the evil disposition, and who should have been immured in a convent, or, better still, in a reformatory. Nevertheless, the future Comtesse de Soissons is a person of some interest, if only because she was the King's first love, and undoubtedly exercised a strong influence over his character at a most critical time of his life.

She was one of the first batch of nieces to arrive from Italy, coming over with her cousins the Martinozzis and with her elder sister Laura, who became Duchesse de Mercœur and died at the age of twenty-one, after an illness of twenty-four hours.

It was said, the Grande Mademoiselle tells us,¹ that Monsieur de Mancini had foretold that the deaths of his wife and daughter should take place in the same year, and had stated that soon afterwards the Cardinal would be threatened with some great calamity. For this reason the decease of his relations caused Mazarin special trouble—at least, so said the uncharitable when he shut himself up for several days after the deaths of his niece and his sister, and refused to see any one.

¹ Chéruel, "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iii. p. 26.



From the original in the possession of the Vatican Library.

CARDINAL MAZARIN.

However, his seclusion cannot have been of very long duration, as twenty days after her sister's death Olympe married the Comte de Soissons—a great match, and one, we are told, which filled the Cardinal's heart with rejoicing.

Olympe is described by Madame de Motteville¹ as being, on her arrival in France, a plain child with a dark long face, pointed chin, and small lively eyes. However, in 1654, when the King, a boy of sixteen, thought himself in love with her, she had improved in appearance.

“She had eyes full of fire; and in spite of the faults in her face, the age of eighteen had treated her kindly. With increasing plumpness she had become less sallow—her complexion now was a fine one; her face was shorter, her cheeks were adorned with dimples, and her mouth was smaller than before, while an air of fashion, combined with great care over her toilette, gave brilliancy to this mediocre beauty. At any rate, she appeared lovely in the eyes of the King, and tolerably pretty even to those who were indifferent.”²

At first the love-making between the two seemed merely a pastime, and even the Queen-mother, who was generally on the alert to notice any flirtation which might become dangerous, hardly took the matter seriously. Neither did Mademoiselle de

¹ Petitot, “Motteville Mémoires,” vol. i. p. 27.

² *Ibid.* vol. xxxix. p. 367.

Mancini. She soon discovered that there was no hope that she would become Queen, but she found the position of first lady at the Court extremely pleasant, and enjoyed being led out to dance by the King, and having amusements and gaieties got up for her benefit.

She had been disappointed that owing to her cousin's reputation for superior amiability as well as beauty, she had been chosen instead of herself as wife to the Prince of Conti; however, being a practical person she resigned herself to circumstances, and looked about for another Prince who would be suitable as a husband.

In 1656, the King, who was still deeply in love, gave a grand tournament in her honour, at which the riders were divided into three companies of eight cavaliers each, the King being at the head of the first company, the Duc de Guise leading the second, and the Duc de Candale the third. The colours of the first company were scarlet and white, of the second blue and white, and of the third green and white; and the horsemen themselves wore Roman costumes of dazzling gold and silver. Each company was mustered by its Maréchal de Camp, mounted its horses in the garden of the Palais-Royal, and then rode past the Palace, that the cavaliers might show themselves to the ladies on the balconies and in the windows.

Even the sensible Madame de Motteville forgets

to moralise on this occasion, and becomes enthusiastic. "The brightness of the colours, the brilliancy of their costumes, their good looks, and the beauty of their horses, made one think with pleasure of having read about something similar in novels, especially in the 'Amadis.'" The King, we are told, surpassed every one in good looks, cleverness and fine horsemanship, as was of course proper in his position, and one of the twelve magnificently dressed pages who preceded him bore a shield with a sun and the device "Ne più, ne pari" ("No one greater or equal").¹

This homage, however, led to nothing practical, and on February 21, 1657—after the Grand-maitre, son of the Maréchal de la Meilleraye, had refused the honour of an alliance with her—Olympe married Eugène Maurice, Comte de Soissons, second son to the Prince of Carignan, and first cousin to Charles Emanuel, Duke of Savoy.

His eldest brother was a deaf-mute, but by dint of starving and beating he had been taught to ask for what he wanted, and even to understand sustained conversation and to write his answers.

It was a hard age, and deaf-mutes after all fared no worse than lunatics, who, even when not ill-treated, were looked on as objects for ridicule. The Grande Mademoiselle tells us that when—aged nine years—she was staying at a convent, her ladies, to

¹ Petitot, "Motteville Mémoires," vol. xxxix. p. 370.

divert her, took her to share their amusement of watching the antics of an unfortunate madwoman, and that she was so much diverted that she looked at her for hours. The next day her aunt, the Abbess, kindly provided a second lunatic for her entertainment. "As there were no more for the third day I became bored," says the Grande Mademoiselle, "and left, in spite of my aunt's endeavours to keep me."¹

The same lady gives a curious account of her first interview with the newly married Comtesse de Soissons, who was brought to see her by her mother-in-law, the Princess de Carignan.

The visit took place in 1657 when Mademoiselle de Montpensier was on her way back to the Court after her long exile, and had arrived at Saint-Cloud, where her friends and acquaintances crowded to see her. Madame de Carignan was most charming, and overwhelmed her hostess with compliments, but the Comtesse de Soissons—who was evidently in a very bad temper—never opened her lips. She was in a delicate state of health, and Mademoiselle told her ladies to take her out of the crowd into a small room, and followed her there, leaving Madame de Carignan with the rest of the company.

Even after this attention, Madame la Comtesse was a long time without condescending to speak,

¹ Petitot, "*Montpensier Mémoires*," vol. xl, p. 391.

but at last—to quote from Mademoiselle¹—“she asked me suddenly, ‘Why don’t you wear your sleeves as other people do?’ I told her that it inconvenienced me. She retorted: ‘If you think your way of wearing them makes your arms more beautiful, you are making a mistake.’ Then she said, ‘My mother-in-law bothers me a great deal; she is afraid I shall hurt myself; she is always after me.’ As she went out I made her many pretty speeches about the obligations I owe to the Cardinal, told her I love all that belongs to him; that I had felt the greatest joy at her marriage; that I hoped to see her often and to become friends with her. To all this she never answered a word.”

Was she indignant at the part the Grande Mademoiselle had taken against her uncle during the Fronde, or was her conduct merely that of one with a *mauvais naturel* who was in a pettish mood, and was annoyed by a fussy if well-meaning mother-in-law?

We do not know; but Mademoiselle’s next remark is comprehensible. “I did not find her as beautiful as I had expected, and looking at her, I could not understand how the King could be in love with her.”

For her part, Madame de Carignan finished her visit with an almost pathetic attempt to conciliate her hostess. “She said to me,” remarks

¹ Chéruel, “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iii. p. 81.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, “‘My daughter-in-law has dressed herself specially to see you; she has left off her mourning and has put on a lace handkerchief.’ This,” comments the Grande Mademoiselle acridly, “did not make her any better-looking, for she is very short. However,” she adds, as if to show that *she* at least has done her best, “I praised her about everything, and said that I had found her greatly improved since I last saw her. She received all this with a silence and an indifference which astonished the whole company.”

It would not be necessary to dwell so minutely on the personality of this little black countess, except that she appears to have been rather left out in the consideration of the forces which decided the character of Louis XIV., and that while we hear much of the influence exerted by La Vallière, Montespan, and Maintenon, very little notice has been taken of the fact that from sixteen years of age, or even earlier, till forty, Louis was constantly in the society, and—during the earlier time—absolutely under the domination, of the worst woman in his Court.

La Vallière’s influence would not have changed the boy of nineteen—who at the time of his flirtation with Mademoiselle de la Motte d’Argencourt confessed to his mother that he felt quite changed from what he usually was, and that he must, to satisfy his conscience, keep away from all occasions

of temptation ; who, moreover, took flight to Vincennes to remove himself from danger—to the man who drove about without shame between La Vallière and Madame de Montespan, and flaunted before France a state of things which was Oriental in its immorality.¹

His mother, who had been the chief restraining influence, had indeed died in the interim, but before her death he had begun to chafe at her attempts to control him, and to consider her a drag on his pleasures. This impatience was not to be wondered at, for Madame de Soissons was Queen of the Court, and her influence did not tend towards virtue. We shall come across her again deep in the frivolities and intrigues which made up the life of the ill-fated Henriette d'Angleterre ; but perhaps it would be well here to sketch her life, that we may realise the manner of woman she was.

For a time after her marriage, everything went well, and there was nothing to distinguish her outward life, at any rate, from that of the crowd of butterfly existences around her. Like the rest of the ladies of the Court, she spent her time in flirting, playing cards, and intriguing for places and for money for her own benefit, or for that of her friends.

True, she was the centre of the Court. The King hardly moved from her side ; and, as Saint-Simon tells

¹ Petitot "Motteville Mémoires," vol. xxxix. p. 403.

us,¹ she trained him and the young courtiers in wit, love-making, and in that politeness which was to the end the distinguishing mark of the Grand Monarque.

For her benefit the King invented the post of Superintendent of the Queen's Household—to which he attached any prerogatives he chose, while the holder of it was privileged to arrange all the amusements and pleasures of the Court, and to include or exclude people as she pleased. The position of the Comtesse was practically absolute, and as she and her husband lived together in apparent amity, her reputation remained unsullied. The King's love for La Vallière did not interfere with her splendour, for the gentle and timid favourite did not care to reign at Court.

Later on we hear of her intrigues with Vardes, intrigues which, coming to the ears of the King, shook her ascendancy, and even caused her exile for a short time. Afterwards, domestic difficulties began to assail her, for the Comte de Soissons became jealous—as indeed he had every reason to be ; and such was by this time her reputation, that when he went to the war in 1673, and died suddenly in the flower of his age, she was credited with his murder.

L'Abbé Choisy² tells a curious story on this

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 271.

² "Choisy Mémoires," vol. i. p. 222.

subject. News, he says, had come to the Comtesse de Soissons that her husband was very ill in Champagne, and she seemed doubtful whether it would not be well to go to nurse him. While she was debating, an old gentleman of her household, who was evidently in her secrets, offered to tell her by means of a spirit whether or no the Comte would recover from his illness. "The gentleman," to quote from Choisy, "brought a little girl of five years of age into the room, put into her hand a glass of clear water, and made conjurations over it. The girl said that the water was becoming troubled ; and the gentleman remarked in a low voice to the company present that he had commanded the spirit to make a white horse appear in the glass if the Count would die, and a tiger if he would recover. He then asked the little girl whether she saw anything in the glass. 'Ah,' she cried, 'what a beautiful white horse!' The same trial was made five times running, and the little girl always announced it was death, by different signs which Monsieur de Vendôme or Madame de Bouillon had named beforehand in a low voice to the gentleman without the little girl hearing them. This fact is true, and the three persons present relate it to any one who cares to listen."

L'Abbé Choisy does not tell us whether the affectionate wife seemed affected in any way by the news that her wishes were likely to be accomplished.

The dread of poison hung heavily in the air in the seventeenth century. From its headquarters and cradle in Italy, the art of poisoning had been imported into France by the Medici, and during Louis XIV.'s reign a race of fortune-tellers and sorceresses existed in Paris, who provided love amulets and practised chiromancy, while in secret they plied their deadly trade of removing inconvenient people out of the world.

It was said that they could poison by means of gloves, scent, or by merely rubbing something on a glass out of which their intended victim would drink. However that may be, there is no doubt that they were very skilful, and that as medical science was then at an elementary stage, the danger of detection was small. Nevertheless, the fear on the subject which permeated society caused many deaths to be referred to the one dreaded nightmare, which were in reality caused by some disease unknown to the physicians, who occasionally took refuge in the awful whisper of "poison," when they were unable to assign a cause to a sudden death.

It is significant of the state of mind of the time, that when the Grande Mademoiselle had quarrelled with her father during her exile after the Fronde, and was on her way to see him at Blois, she remembered with melancholy that he was the son of a Medici, and was afraid; though she reflected

afterwards with a qualm that the blood of the Medici must be also in her veins, or such thoughts would never enter her mind.

Nevertheless, the *poudre de succession* which the fortune-tellers sold, was often much more practical in its effects than the *poudre pour l'amour*, by means of which many of the Court ladies hoped to become successors to La Vallière, or to Madame de Montespan.

La Voisin—the charming lady who was the chief trader in these mysterious powders—was imprudent enough to bring herself prominently before the public eye by prosecuting some associates who she considered had treated her unfairly, and the revelations which ensued were so damning to Madame de Soissons' reputation that she was advised to leave the country, and in 1678 she fled to the Netherlands in disguise.

Madame de Sévigné gives the following account of her departure from France¹: “As to Madame de Soissons, she could not face imprisonment; they were willing to give her time for flight, if she were guilty. On Wednesday she was playing at bassette. Monsieur de Bouillon appeared. She asked him why he had come back, as he was not expected till next day. He requested her to go into his private room. There he told her that she must leave France, or go to the Bastille. She did not hesitate between

¹ Letter to Madame de Grignau, January 24, 1680.

the two. She made the Marquise d'Alluye leave her game ; they did not appear again. Supper-time came. It was said that Madame la Comtesse was having supper in the town : everybody left, convinced that something extraordinary was taking place. Meanwhile she was making up parcels, taking money and precious stones. She made the footmen and coachmen put on grey jerkins ; she had eight horses put into the carriage. She made the Marquise d'Alluye—who it was said did not wish to go—sit inside with her ; two maids sat in front. She told her people that they were not to distress themselves about her ; that she was innocent, but that these rascally women had amused themselves by naming her. She cried. She went to see Madame de Carignan, and at three o'clock in the morning she left Paris. It is said that she is going to Namur : you may well believe that they do not intend to follow her." Madame de Sévigné also relates¹ that the King said to Madame de Carignan : " Madame, I was very anxious that Madame la Comtesse should be saved ; perhaps one day I shall render an account for this to God and my people."

She escaped only in the nick of time, for she was about to be arrested, and was for ever disgraced in France, her name, by order of the Parliament, being shouted in every public place in Paris. How-

¹ Letter to Madame de Grignau, January 24, 1680.

ever, she was well received in the Spanish Netherlands, and settled there for a time, making many German and Spanish friends. She was, however, terribly bored, and missed the brilliant Court from which she was for ever an exile. Therefore, as one of her sons had distinguished himself in war and diplomacy at Vienna, and the Queen of Spain was daughter to her old allies Monsieur and Madame his first wife, she determined to establish herself there, hoping to be received with open arms by the Spanish Court.

In this she was disappointed. The Spanish grandees were serious and unsociable, her extremely doubtful reputation—if indeed leniency will allow it to be described as doubtful—made them shy of becoming intimate with her, and they refused to grant her what she considered her due precedence.

However, the Queen—according to Saint-Simon, from whom this account is taken¹—did not, apparently, believe the stories she must have heard against her, and was delighted to find some one with whom she could speak her own language. She therefore received her in secret. But the King disliked her, and was extremely cold in manner if he chanced to come across her.

Being cut off from the Spaniards, the Comtesse was obliged to seek society among foreigners at the Court, and became intimate with Mansfeldt,

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 28.

the Austrian Ambassador. According to the extraordinary story told by Saint-Simon, the Emperor wanted to gain the King of Spain as ally against the French, and as the Queen exerted much influence over her husband, and being a French woman was naturally an obstacle to this design, Mansfeldt was entrusted with the business of poisoning her.

This was a difficult undertaking, for she had inherited her mother's grace and charm, and was extremely popular in Spain. She was warned of her danger, and Monsieur sent her antidotes from France, while her husband commanded her to eat and drink nothing which he had not first tasted.

No one, however, seems to have thought of the danger of the presence in Madrid of the Comtesse de Soissons, who had been expelled from France as a poisoner. Nothing sinister took place for a time, so that the precautions became relaxed, and the Comtesse de Soissons feigned so much attachment to the poor young Queen, and so much sympathy with her fears and anxieties, that she was the last person her victim would have suspected.

However, one day after dinner—a time when she often came to the Palace to see the Queen privately—she managed to administer the poison in some iced water, and the effect was sudden, death resulting in a very short time.

The Comtesse de Soissons was of course horrified

at the loss of her friend, but the furious and grief-stricken King began to make such minute and searching inquiries that she became alarmed, and a few days later she disappeared from the country.

For a time after this catastrophe she wandered aimlessly about Europe, the Emperor being afraid to receive her, and France and Spain being of course closed to her. At last the Austrians—who owed her a debt of gratitude for her adroitness—arranged that she should be allowed to enter Brussels.

There she led a miserable existence till her death in 1708. She was often in great poverty, and was looked at askance by those who surrounded her. One of her sons, Prince Eugène de Soissons, became famous, but no glory reflected from his exploits shone on his mother's darkened reputation, and her daughters turned out as badly as herself, though their adventures did not make so much noise in the world.

This digression seems necessary in order to explain the character of the central figure at Louis XIV.'s Court during the first years of his reign. We must now return to the year 1658, when the Comtesse de Soissons was a wife of about a year's standing, and the King a young man just recovering from a dangerous illness; while Puyguilhem—still an obscure courtier—was eagerly watching any opportunity which might enable him to further his fortunes.

The burning question of the day, and one which occupied the mind of both Queen and Cardinal continually, was that of finding a suitable wife for the young King. The Queen's eyes turned longingly to Spain. She had only become a Frenchwoman since her husband's death, and she remembered the land of her birth with yearning. However, the continuation of the war with Spain, and the fact that if a sickly baby step-brother were to die, the Infanta would be heiress to the Spanish throne, seemed to make this hope impossible of fulfilment.

Meanwhile, the Duchess of Savoy, sister to Louis XIII., was working with assiduity to obtain the hand of the King for her second daughter, the Princess Marguerite. Through the marriage of his niece with the Comte de Soissons, the house of Savoy was now connected with the Cardinal, and he therefore favoured this idea, though he diplomatically kept his wishes in the background.

The Queen, however, did not approve of this alliance, and, failing the Infanta, would have liked the King to marry the English Princess. To this idea, however, he objected strongly, and it was at last settled that he should meet the Princess of Savoy, and should see whether her appearance pleased him.

There was another aspirant for the honour of becoming Queen of France, for Gaston, Duke of Orleans, was most anxious that Louis should marry

his eldest daughter by his second wife, a match of which the Grand Mademoiselle tells us candidly that she would have disapproved strongly, as it would have been terrible for her younger sister to have taken precedence over her. She need scarcely have been afraid, for the Fronde stood between the elder branch of the Orleans family, and all hope of preferment from the hand of Queen or Cardinal.

Suddenly, however, while each of the principal actors in the drama was planning how best to carry out his or her aims, and was breathing freely after managing to detach the King from his flirtation with Mademoiselle de la Motte d'Argencourt, another Mancini took the foreground of the stage with striking and menacing effect.

Marie, the third of the sisters, the one who, according to her mother, possessed the *mauvais naturel*, had wept bitterly and shown the utmost despair during the King's dangerous illness ; when her sister, the Countess of Soissons, had made a parade of the utmost indifference. Marie was a thin, sallow girl, whose beautiful teeth were her only beauty, and who otherwise, with her big mouth and black lustreless eyes,¹ was really ugly. However, she now became the King's favourite companion. She had intellect, passion, and noble impulses, though they became obscured during her stormy, rudderless life.

¹ Petitot, "Motteville Mémoires," vol. xxxix. p. 400.

She educated Louis XIV., as Madame Arvède Barine tells us in her interesting account of her¹—she nourished his ambition, and imparted to him her ideal of what a King should be. She possessed, too, the enormous motive power of love, while the verve, force, and fascination of the Mancinis were strong in her, and if she had been diplomatic enough to allow herself to be ruled by her uncle, and had not flaunted her absolute indifference, and indeed hostility to him on all occasions, it seems probable that she would have married Louis XIV. in spite of the Queen-mother's strenuous opposition.

When there seemed to be no chance of bringing about the Spanish alliance, it was decided, secretly to the joy of the Cardinal, that the Court should go to Lyons to meet the Court of Savoy, and to inspect the Princess Marguerite. The King begged that Marie de Mancini might be one of the expedition, as he said that he would not marry without her approval, and the Queen was reluctantly obliged to grant his wish.

There was some delay, which Madame de Motteville considers providential, in the start, owing to the fact that the Queen-mother at first decided that she disliked the idea of the Savoy alliance too much to be one of the expedition, and then changed her mind, thinking that after all it would be best to go,

¹ Arvède Barine, "Grandes Dames et Princesses—Marie de Mancini."

and to work secretly to prevent the marriage, while she pretended to approve of it. Anne of Austria excelled at this double-facedness or diplomacy, whichever we may choose to term it, for she had had a long apprenticeship to it during her unhappy married life.

CHAPTER V

Meeting between the Courts of France and of Savoy—Anne of Austria's despair—Hand of the Infanta offered by King of Spain—The French Court leaves Lyons—Louis XIV. and Marie de Mancini—Their parting—Louis marries the Infanta—Her character—Death of Mazarin—Marie de Mancini's marriage—Monsieur's marriage—Character of Henriette d'Orléans—Court intrigues—Fouquet's trial—His imprisonment for life.

THE King and Marie de Mancini rode together most of the way to Lyons, where the French arrived on November 23, 1658.

On the 28th news came that Madame Royale and her party were approaching, and first the Cardinal, and then Monsieur went out to meet them.

Madame Royale approached the goal towards which she had for long directed eager eyes, with hope and confidence. It was impossible, she thought, that after having asked to see her daughter, the King would affront the Court of Savoy by refusing to marry her. The Princess Marguerite, on the other hand, hated the expedition, and, being more sensible than her hysterical and dissipated mother, feared a rebuff. She knew that she was plain and not likely to take a young man's fancy, and she had even feigned illness to prevent what she con-

sidered would be a most painful and humiliating experience. She is certainly the most sympathetic and pleasing figure among the assemblage of royalties collected together on this momentous occasion.

The King's impatience to see the lady who was destined to be his bride was so great, that he could not remain in the carriage in which he and the Queen-mother had gone to meet their visitors, but mounted a horse and rode to Madame Royale's carriage. The meeting must have been trying for the Princess, as—having made the ordinary salute—he looked at her fixedly for a moment without speaking, and then galloped back to the Queen-mother, who was waiting anxiously for his news.

He dismounted, looking gay and well satisfied, and, according to the account given by the Grande Mademoiselle, who was an eye-witness, the Queen said to him : “ ‘ Well, my son ? ’ He answered : ‘ She is smaller than the Maréchale [de Villeroy], but she has the prettiest figure in the world. Her complexion is ’—he hesitated, not knowing how to describe it. At last he found the word,—‘ olive, but it suits her well. She has beautiful eyes ; in short, she pleases me, and is quite to my taste.’ The Queen said she was very glad to hear this.”¹

Madame Royale's carriage then came up, and the meeting between her and the Queen-mother took

¹ Chéruel, “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iii. p. 303.

place, both ladies getting down from their carriages. Madame looked tired and was much swathed in her head-dress, so that it was difficult to see what she was like ; but she was most gushing, kissing the Queen's hands and paying her tremendous compliments. She presented her daughters, and the Savoy party got into the French royal carriage, Madame de Savoie sitting in front with the Queen, while the King and the Princess Marguerite occupied the seats by one of the carriage doors, and talked together as though they had known each other all their lives.

This was commented on as remarkable, for the King was generally very shy with strangers. However, he told the Princess about his Musketeers, his foot and horse soldiers, and entered into detail as to their way of marching, and who commanded them. Then he went on to expatiate about the joys of Paris, while on her part she told him of the delights of Turin, and described her brother's Guards.

In fact the two young people appeared to be getting on capitally together, as Anne of Austria felt with chagrin as she sat in the body of the carriage and, cold and unexpansive herself, listened without sympathy—and indeed with inward disgust—to the transports and compliments with which she was overwhelmed by her enthusiastic sister-in-law, who talked incessantly, and was charmed by every-

thing she saw, exclaiming especially on the beauty of the Guards who rode on each side of the carriage, who were, she cried, much finer men than those of the same companies in the time of Louis XIII.

Anne of Austria was in despair ; but she was forced to listen with politeness to Madame Royale's chatter till they arrived at the hotel, where, fortunately, her unwelcome visitor did not stay long, being conducted to her lodging by the King.

Later in the evening, the Queen had interviews with both the King and Cardinal, but obtained no satisfaction from either, the Cardinal telling her that it was impossible to interfere in the matter, while the King resisted her firmly, said he wanted to marry, that he liked the Princess Marguerite, and—as she pressed him further—announced passionately that he was master, and would do as he pleased. Then the Queen—who seldom wept—broke down completely, but the two men were apparently firm. She had, as usual, very little influence, and was reduced to the expedient of sending to all the convents in Lyons, and ordering them to pray God to grant her desires.

However, next day news came which was a surprise to every one but the Cardinal, and which made a sudden and sensational change in the aspect of affairs.

The King of Spain had been alarmed when he

heard of the proposed meeting at Lyons, and even the pretty doll-like Infanta had felt a little troubled at the news. For was not the French King the greatest *parti* in Europe, and therefore properly destined to become her husband? She was vaguely disturbed, and her only consolation was her father's oracular speech when he heard of the probability of Louis' marriage with the Princess Marguerite : "That cannot, and shall not be." Therefore she waited and hoped. Meanwhile, Philip IV. saw there was no time to be lost, and that he must show his hand without delay. He therefore sent Don Antonio Pimental, who had long known the Cardinal, to offer the French King without further ado, peace, and the hand of his daughter. The Cardinal hesitated and temporised. Ambitious ideas for his niece floated, no doubt, in his mind, and at any rate he would have preferred a queen from Savoy to one from Spain. However, it was impossible to keep the news of the arrival of the envoy secret for ever, and the Cardinal produced him with theatrical effect the day after the meeting between the two Courts.

Most of the day Pimental was closeted with Mazarin, and in the evening, to quote from Madame de Motteville, "the Cardinal entered the Queen's room, and finding her thoughtful and melancholy, said, laughing, 'Good news, Madame.' 'What !' said the Queen, 'is it peace ?' 'Better than that,

Madame ; I bring your Majesty peace, *and* the Infanta ! ' ' ' ¹

In spite of his preference for the Savoy marriage, and his foreboding recollections of the relations between Richelieu and Anne of Austria, it must have been a satisfaction to the Cardinal to realise the credit that would accrue to him throughout the country if he were the instrument to obtain the blessings of peace for France ; besides, he apparently hoped that it would be possible after all to temporise, and at least to defer the second condition of the treaty.

To the Queen—though she made a fair show of being doubtful whether the negotiations between France and Spain would end satisfactorily—the news meant a sudden and unexpected hope of fulfilment of her most cherished wish.

The King, too, was outwardly delighted, as—to quote again from the sensible and well-informed Madame de Motteville—"he only wanted the Princess Marguerite because he wished to marry, and did not dislike her ; but realising—by the goodness of his understanding—the infinite distance between her and the Infanta, and feeling there was a possibility of obtaining the more important lady, he did not hesitate between the two."

Nevertheless, beneath the impenetrable armour of Louis' cold reserve and shyness, were many

¹ Petitot, "Motteville Mémoires," vol. xxxix. p. 452.

contending passions. The philosophy of life taught him by the Comtesse de Soissons and others of her kind, inculcated the doctrine that while love was the necessary salt of life, marriage and the tender passion were almost necessarily divided by an impassable gulf. Still, he could not forget her sister—the stormy girl with the big black eyes who was devoted to him, and was pleading for love—for marriage. Perhaps, after all, he would find his truest happiness in sacrificing everything for a woman who adored him as she did !

She, for her part, was devoured with anxiety. The whole fortune of her life hung in the balance. On one side the prospect was dazzling ; on the other was a crippled future, full of vain regrets and emptiness.

She waited hungrily for news, her black eyes full of infinite longings. She asked questions, she tried to find out what was happening. “Mademoiselle de Mancini came to ask me, while the King was taking back Madame Royale,” says the Grande Mademoiselle, “what he had said of the Princess Marguerite, and how he had behaved to her. I told her. It seemed to me that his conduct displeased her.”¹

Afterwards, Marie demanded of him passionately whether he would not be ashamed to marry so ugly a woman, and next day it was noticed that

¹ Chéruel, “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iii. p. 306.

he talked almost continually to her, and that his manner to the Princess Marguerite was completely changed. Marie de Mancini's jealousy and anxiety embellished her. She became almost beautiful, and the King's love for her increased till, beside her insistent tenderness, the question of Princess Marguerite *versus* the Infanta faded in his mind almost into insignificance.

The Princess Marguerite behaved during this trying time with the utmost dignity, and with a self-control which extorted admiration even from Anne of Austria, who was not disposed to regard her with leniency. Her pride upheld her, and her manner to the King never changed. She did not appear to wish specially to please him, but on the other hand she showed no pique at his altered demeanour, but was consistently pleasant and agreeable.

The Grande Mademoiselle, for her part, though she was torn in sunder by no intense feelings, had plenty to occupy her mind, being greatly taken up by questions of precedence, and by preserving her own dignity and position as grand-daughter to Henri IV., and therefore "petite fille de France," moreover entitled to special precedence because this relationship was on the male side.

She found time also for bickerings with Madame Royale, for—though she was never certain that she would wish to become Duchess of Savoy—she was

annoyed at that lady's very evident reluctance to look upon her with favour as a possible daughter-in-law.

She says on this subject, "She [Madame Royale] talked to me a great deal about her trouble at the indifference her son showed about matrimony, and said that to see him married was the one thing for which she longed on earth. I told her she was right, and that, if her son were to die without children she would not be as happy as at present, but added that, however much people understood her interests in the matter, they did not do her justice about it, as they all agreed that she did everything she could to prevent him from marrying."¹

This remark was hardly polite under the circumstances, but Madame Royale controlled herself, and drew from Mademoiselle an account of her disputes with her father, sympathising warmly with her views on the subject, while she was no doubt privately strengthened in her opinion that so quarrelsome a lady would be highly undesirable as daughter-in-law. The Grande Mademoiselle had, as usual, played her cards badly.

The situation, however, which brought this group of royal personages into so peculiar a position towards each other, could not last for ever; and the Cardinal was reluctantly obliged to inform

¹ Chéruel, "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iii. p. 316.

Madame Royale that it was necessary that the Queen of France should work for the peace of Europe, and that if there were a chance of obtaining the Infanta's hand, the French Court must accept it ; but that failing this, the King would promise positively to marry the Princess Marguerite.

Then terrible scenes ensued, scenes during which, according to report, Madame de Savoie banged her head against the wall in her despair ; while she was seen by curious observers at different times weeping bitterly, or nearly fainting from agitation.

She certainly deserved a certain amount of sympathy, for she had set her heart on her daughter's marriage with Louis XIV., and her position was humiliating. We read of her becoming as pale as death, and going with widely strained eyes to one of her many audiences with Mazarin ; and Anne of Austria's sole comment when she hears of this,—“ How I pity him ! She will torment him terribly ! ”¹ —sounds rather callous.

However, to every one's surprise, Madame de Savoie came from this particular interview in a happy frame of mind, gay and full of talk. Evidently the adroit Cardinal had consoled her with the hope of a happy termination to the affair.

Soon afterwards the two Courts separated, and the French party arrived in Paris at the end of January 1659. There the King and Marie de

¹ Chéruei, “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iii. p. 323.

Mancini were inseparable—she following him everywhere, and whispering in his ear even in the Queen's presence.

The Queen was at first angry, and then grew really alarmed; her fears being increased by an interview with the Cardinal, in which he tried—tentatively and with much embarrassment—to sound her as to whether she would be likely to consent to a marriage between the King and his niece.

Whatever may have been the tie by which she and Mazarin were united, at this moment her sense of the dignity of France and her pride of race asserted themselves, and she answered that she did not believe the King to be capable of such folly, but that if he were, the whole of France would revolt against him and the Cardinal, and that she would herself lead the rebellion. According to Madame de Motteville,¹ the Cardinal never forgave her these words, and she suffered for them till the end of her life.

However, he was more resigned to the inevitable when he discovered that his niece intended to withstand him if she ever came into power, and he began from this time to work conscientiously for the marriage with the Infanta, and made preparations for a journey to the frontier to arrange the matter with the Spanish Minister. He stood firm even when the King begged his permission to marry

¹ Petitot, "Mémoires," vol. xl. p. 3.

his niece, and exclaimed that he would rather poignard her than raise her by such treachery. A passionate scene took place between the lovers, during which Marie cried, "You weep, and yet I go, and you are master!" And then, as he did not answer, she rushed at him and tore one of his lace cuffs, exclaiming, "Ha, I am deserted!"¹ There were also melancholy interviews between the Queen and her son, from which he emerged with his eyes swollen, while she appeared much depressed. Later on, too, secret communications were discovered between the two lovers, which if not stopped would most likely have led to marriage.

Even on his way to espouse the Infanta, the King insisted on meeting his lady-love at Saint-Jean d'Angely, and promised to remain faithful to her.² However, at Fontarabia on June 3, 1660, he was married by proxy to the Infanta. She was very pretty, being somewhat like her Aunt Anne of Austria, only smaller and with different colouring. Her complexion was brilliant, she had bright blue eyes and round cheeks, a pretty rosebud mouth, and beautiful pale golden hair. She was gentle and devoted to her husband; her eyes followed him whenever he was in the room, and she was happy for the day if he looked kindly at her.

¹ "Mémoires de Madame Marie de Mancini, Connétable Colonna," p. 14.

² La Fayette, "Mémoires de Henriette d'Angleterre," p. 91.

On the other hand, she was the last person in the world to obtain any influence over him, and her life must have been most miserable.

She had a strong sense of her own dignity, and of what was due to her ; but she appears to have had no power of impressing this on other people, and she would occasionally indulge in an exhibition of petty spite which—however deeply she was wronged—was hardly worthy of her position as Queen. She was extremely devout—too devout, Madame de Motteville remarks, for a French Queen—for she was always at prayers, and was quite Spanish in her subserviency to the priests. She was, besides, intensely jealous, and had certainly every cause to be so ; but she showed this in a most injudicious way, and was even foolish enough not to grieve much at the death of her protector and friend the Queen-mother, because she imagined that in consequence of it she would become more important than she had been before. She was pettish and childish. She hated the journeys which the King with the whole Court took frequently to the various seats of war, wept when there was water to pass over, declared she would not eat when food was brought, and wept again when she found that it had all been eaten. The King liked women to show courage and fortitude ; above all—especially as he grew older, and his consummate selfishness increased,—he wanted, as Madame de Maintenon discovered



From an engraving after the picture by Boucher.

MARIA-THÉRÈSE OF AUSTRIA, QUEEN OF FRANCE.

to her cost, to have women round him who should rise above human weaknesses, and should never be sick nor sorry.

No woman could have kept him faithful to her, and no woman who loved him could have failed to suffer when, without the slightest consideration for her feelings, he flaunted his various attachments before the face of the world ; but the poor silly little Queen, with her helpless affection, her causeless alarms, her little follies and utter want of self-control, was the last person in the world to exert any power for good over him. What chance had she among the brilliant women with whom Louis loved to surround himself—against a Montespan with the turn of wit peculiar to the Montemarts, or a Maintenon endowed with perfect tact and power over herself ?

Soon after the King's marriage Marie de Mancini was, to her grief and indignation, engaged by her uncle to the Connétable Colonne. She appeared at the Court again ; but soon the dreaded moment arrived, the proxy from the Connétable made his appearance, and she was forced to leave for Italy without further delay.

According to Madame de la Fayette, "She bore her trouble with much constancy, and even with a certain amount of pride, but at the first stopping place after Paris she was so overcome with grief, and so much crushed by the violence of the effort

by which she had controlled herself, that she thought she would have been obliged to remain there. At last she was able to continue her journey, and made her way to Italy, with the consolation of being no longer the subject of a King whom she had expected to marry.”¹

The year 1661 was eventful. Mazarin had died on March 9, before Marie de Mancini's marriage. He was not much regretted.

The nation rejoiced that they were free from one of whose political triumphs they were ignorant, while—overtaxed and oppressed—they groaned under his extortions, and looked with hungry eyes at the millions with which he endowed his nieces and decked the magnificent palaces in which he lived.

The Queen-mother, who was most probably his wife, shed a few tears ; but on the whole she bore his death with equanimity, and was perhaps relieved at it. He had for long refused her even the semblance of power, and during the last years of his life he had treated her as though she were a waiting-maid, and had vented on her without mercy the attacks of spleen caused by his ill-health.

The young Queen had no cause to love the Cardinal, who had stinted her of the allowance due to her ; and his nieces—who were left enormous

¹ Asse, “*La Fayette Mémoires*,” p. 27. An interesting account of Marie de Mancini is found in Madame Arvède Barine's book “*Grandes Dames et Princesses*.”

fortunes—did not regret him in the least ; in fact their conduct was so heartless that one of their Italian servants reproached them with their ingratitude, saying : “ Mesdemoiselles, you avenge the French nation for all the hardness the Cardinal your uncle has shown towards them, by the hardness you show towards him.”¹

The King seemed the most sincere mourner ; but his gravity proceeded in part from a sense of his coming responsibility, for he had determined that he would not be a *roi fainéant*, but would work hard and rule the kingdom himself, so that there should never again be a First Minister.

He set himself to his task in a most businesslike manner, mapped out his day methodically, and never allowed anything to interfere with his hours of work ; in fact his habits became so regular, that later in his life Saint-Simon tells us that the well-informed could tell exactly where the King would be at any given hour of the day.

The work Louis undertook was arduous and varied ; for he had no central Council, each Minister referring the business of his own department directly to the King without consultation with his colleagues, so that in all things the monarch was supreme.

On April 1, 1661, another important event took place, for Monsieur married Henriette d'Angleterre, daughter of Charles I. and of the exiled

¹ Petitot, “ Motteville Mémoires,” vol. xl. p. 107.

Henrietta Maria. The King scoffed at the marriage, making slighting remarks about the bride, and saying, in reference to her girlish thinness: "You are going to marry all the bones of the Holy Innocents."¹ But Monsieur, in spite of his former contempt for the English exiles, seemed most anxious for the match.

The sixteen-year-old bride was certainly thin and unformed, and one shoulder was higher than the other. Her face was too long for perfect beauty, but her complexion was pink and white, and her eyes, though small, were soft and bright. Up to the time of her marriage her mother had kept her much in the background, so that she was little known, but her amiability, charm, and fascination are mentioned by all her contemporaries.

She possessed exquisite tact; her understanding was so keen that a hint, or chance word, would enlighten her on matters without further explanation, though her gentleness often caused her to hesitate to explain herself for fear of hurting any one's feelings. The ladies surrounding her adored her, and Madame de la Fayette tells us that she possessed so much natural sweetness, and was so little capable of bitterness or anger, that what *she* called bad temper would have been amiability in other women.²

¹ Chéruei, "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iii. p. 310.

² "La Fayette Mémoires"—Henriette d'Angleterre, p. 104.

This charming Princess was married to an utterly dissipated Prince who was completely under the control of his favourites, who adorned and painted himself like a woman, and whose second wife remarked that it was a good thing she did not care for diamonds, as Monsieur wanted them all. His only good points were his love for his mother and brother, but he cared for neither of his wives. According to Madame de la Fayette, "The miracle of inflaming the heart of this Prince could be accomplished by no woman on earth."¹

Nevertheless, he did his best to make himself agreeable and to do his duty to his young wife; but it could hardly be expected that a vivacious girl, possessed of unusual intellect, could be satisfied with the attentions of a loveless fop.

The King was a formidable rival, for, besides being invested with the halo of sovereignty, he was in all ways infinitely more attractive than his brother, and was not long in discovering the charms of his young sister-in-law. The feeling between them seems to have been purely platonic, but the pleasure they took in each other's society alarmed the Queen-mother, and roused the jealousy of the unfortunate Queen.

Monsieur, on the other hand, rather approved of the close friendship between his brother and wife, as he considered that it gave him importance; but

¹ "La Fayette Mémoires," p. 29.

after a time, when he realised that, as Ambassador from Louis XIV. to her brother Charles II., his wife was entrusted with secrets which were not confided to him, he too became discontented.

The extraordinary web of plots and counterplots, of lies, backbiting, and jealousies by which Henriette d'Orléans was surrounded, "which gave no one a moment's peace," is fully detailed by Madame de la Fayette, and is so complicated that it is difficult to follow.

The Comtesse de Soissons, then at the height of her power, was Madame's most intimate friend, and she and her utterly unscrupulous lover the Comte de Vardes did their best to embroil everybody, and were the villains of the drama.

Anne of Austria looked on anxiously, and played a well-meaning and conscientious—but occasionally injudicious—part, especially when she showed too openly a perhaps justified preference for her elder daughter-in-law over the younger. The foolish Henrietta Maria seems to have had very little influence in preaching prudence to her daughter, and the King went on his way with his usual egotism. The world was made for him, and he used his enormous prestige and power for the sole purpose of amusing himself, or of satisfying his own passions, without the slightest reference to any one's feelings but his own.

Guiche, who, as far as Madame was concerned,

was a faithful lover, was used by her as a plaything, while La Vallière and two other young girls were ruthlessly chosen for the King's amusement, that gossip should be diverted from him and his sister-in-law.

However—to the horror of the plotters—the King fell violently in love with La Vallière, and a fresh set of intrigues were put on foot by the Comtesse de Soissons with the object of bringing forward a new candidate for the King's favour, or—if this plan were to fail—of informing the Queen of his connection with La Vallière, and thus putting a stop to it.

However, nothing lasted long for Madame, as on June 29, 1670, she died suddenly in great agony, and, according to Madame de Sévigné, “all the joy, delight, and pleasure of the Court died with her.”¹

If, as some suppose, her death was not natural, but was caused by poison administered by her husband's favourites, who wanted to get her out of the way, it would only fit in with the sordid drama which had been enacted around her.

Meanwhile, during the first years of Louis XIV.'s reign, another tragedy was in progress which was watched by France with absorbing interest. After Mazarin's death, Fouquet, who was Superintendent of Finances, appeared likely, according to public

¹ Letter, Madame de Sévigné, July 6, 1670.

opinion, to take his place and to become First Minister.

However, he had many enemies, and both Colbert and the Duchesse de Chevreuse were determined, if possible, to ruin him. More damning fact than all, the King was infuriated against him, from the belief that he had attempted to make love to La Vallière. Nevertheless, in August 1661, soon after Mazarin's death, Louis, with detestable duplicity, announced his intention of paying Fouquet a visit at his magnificent palace at Vaux, where a splendid fête was given in honour of the King and La Vallière.

If the Queen-mother had not intervened, Louis would in cold-blooded cruelty have arrested the Superintendent of Finances in the middle of the fête. As it was, Fouquet was taken prisoner at Nantes, where he had followed the Court after their departure from Vaux.

His trial did not take place till 1664, and was conducted with much animus, the Chancellor Seguier, who presided, in particular distinguishing himself by singular injustice, and Olivier d'Ormesson—whose name should be remembered with respect—being the only impartial judge.

Fouquet was a man of bad moral character, and he had undoubtedly—like the rest of the great officials of the day, Richelieu and Mazarin being notable examples—enriched his own purse at the

public expense ; but the trial was conducted with such a glaring want of equity that many people took his part with vehemence.

The excitement was great. In one of her letters, Madame de Sévigné, Fouquet's most faithful friend, speaks thus of it : " Every one is interested in this great affair. They talk of nothing else ; they deduce consequences, they count on their fingers, they are moved, afraid, hope, wonder, are sad, are overcome,—in short, every one is now in an extraordinary state, but the resignation and firmness of our dear unfortunate friend are sublime."¹

An effort was made, because of some notes written on a paper found behind a looking-glass in the prisoner's room, to condemn him to death on the ground of his having committed treason against the State. He had forgotten the existence of these notes, which had been written fifteen years earlier, during the times of the Fronde, when all France was divided into factions, and Fouquet, thinking that Mazarin was not treating him with proper gratitude, had drawn up a vague project of resistance, and of flight. In the end he was condemned to perpetual banishment. But this judgment was too merciful for the inexorable King, who changed the decree to one of imprisonment for life in the fortress of Pignerol, where we shall come across him again.

¹ Letter, December 17, 1664.

Madame de Sévigné went day after day to the Court and listened to the trial with intense interest, and often with the utmost indignation. Once she placed herself, closely masked, in a house opposite the Arsenal to see Fouquet come out after his trial. She says, "M. d'Artagnan was close beside him, fifty musketeers at thirty or forty paces behind. He seemed in a reverie. When I saw him, my legs trembled, and my heart beat so hard that I was helpless. To go into his hole he had to come quite near where we were standing, and d'Artagnan touched him and pointed us out to him. He saluted us with the smiling look you know. I do not think he recognised me, but I was strangely upset when I saw him enter that little door."¹

Occasionally, the Chancellor Seguier, who had not been conspicuously loyal during the troublous times of the Fronde, was confounded by his prisoner, as Madame de Sévigné records with delight. Once, when Seguier was talking about Fouquet's supposed crime against the State, the prisoner answered: "I confess, sir, that it was foolish and extravagant, but it was not treason. I beg these gentlemen," he said, turning to the judges, "to allow me, not because they are less clever than I, but because I have more leisure to consider the matter, to explain what is meant by the word 'treason.' Treason is when a man who holds an important office, and knows his

¹ Letter, November 27, 1664.

Sovereign's secrets, suddenly goes over to the enemy's side and takes all his family with him ; when he opens the gates of the towns of which he is a Governor to the enemy's army and shuts them to his real master ; when he carries State secrets over to the enemy ;—that, gentlemen, is what is known as treason." The Chancellor did not know where to look, and all the judges wanted to laugh.¹

However, Fouquet's readiness and adroitness did not serve him much, and whenever Madame de Sévigné looked on Louis XIV. dancing a ballet, she could not help quoting to herself Tasso's lines :

"Goffredo ascolta, e in rigida sembianza
Porge più di timor che di speranza."²

("Goffredo listens, but his continual sternness inspires more terror than hope.")

¹ Letter, December 9, 1664.

² "Gerusalemme Liberata," canto v. stanza 35.

CHAPTER VI

De Lauzun's Fortunes—His one serious love-affair—Mademoiselle de Gramont becomes Princess of Monaco—Lauzun follows her to Italy disguised—Mademoiselle de Lauzun's marriage to the Comte de Nogent—The Grande Mademoiselle begins to take notice of Lauzun—Madame de Monaco's character—The King admires her—Lauzun in the Bastille.

HAVING given this slight sketch of the principal personages of the Court which was Lauzun's scene of action, we must return to his doings.

By means of his many influential friends, by means, too, of wit, daring, and adroitness, and of an exaggerated flattery which—mingled with outbursts of incautious and apparently spontaneous candour—no doubt amused the King by showing a personality which contrasted in all ways with his own measured, reflective character, he had so worked himself into favour that he and Vardes are mentioned by Voltaire¹ as the only friends the King ever possessed.

Louis had shown very practical signs of his liking, as in 1667 he took the command of the regiment of dragoons from the Maréchal de la Ferté, made them his own guards, and installed Lauzun as

¹ "Siècle de Louis XIV.," Œuvres, vol. xiii. p. 572.

their Colonel, afterwards raising him to the post of Maréchal de Camp. The dragoons seem to have copied their leader, whom the Marquis de la Fare calls "the most impudent little man who has existed for a century."¹ They were generally feared, and were known as the "diabes à quatre."

Lauzun had certainly prospered in his career in a most striking manner. In spite of his good fortune, however, he was not a happy personage, being subject to fits of gloom and moroseness. When Madame de Sévigné describes the miserable condition of those who spend their time at Court, she cites "the continual rages of the little Lauzun"² as one of the causes of the wretchedness of life there. Lauzun's melancholy may have originated partly in the fact that he was not fortunate in the lady on whom he had fixed his affections. Almost from the time of her infancy he had been madly in love with his cousin Charlotte—Catherine de Gramont—who was two years younger than her brother the Comte de Guiche, and was born in 1639. She returned his love in full measure, and, "both being people of violent passions," we are told that "nothing could be compared to what they felt for each other."³ However, Lauzun's fortune was still to make, and the

¹ "Mémoires du Marquis de la Fare," Petitot, ser. ii., vol. 65, p. 180.

² Letter, January 13, 1672.

³ "La Fayette Mémoires," p. 48.

younger son of a poverty-stricken Gascon nobleman would have been a very poor match for the beautiful and charming daughter of the rich Maréchal de Gramont. The affair made some noise in the world, as the lovers—who had been brought up in the Hôtel Gramont—were apparently allowed to see almost as much as they pleased of each other till they were parted by the announcement that a suitable husband had been found for Mademoiselle de Gramont.

Supplications and despair were in vain; at Bidache, on March 30, 1660—after the Maréchal de Gramont's return from his special mission to Spain—his daughter was married against her will to Louis de Grimaldi, Prince of Monaco and Duke of Valentinois. He was three years her junior, a boy of eighteen, and was not suitable to her in any way; but her tastes were not consulted, and probably, if they had been, it would have been discovered that in her eyes every man except Lauzun would have been equally objectionable as a husband. "If she can forget de Lauzun, there is no doubt she will make a good wife," was Madame de Sévigné's philosophical comment on the matter. However, once safely married, she was left at the French Court, while her young husband travelled back to his dominions. This seems to us now culpable carelessness on the part of those in authority, but the French seventeenth-

century code of morals seems to have taught that once a woman was married, it hardly mattered what she did, if no open scandal were caused, and that anything which only upset her mind and imperilled any small chance of happiness which may have been allowed to her, was absolutely of no account.

The newly made Princess was unhappily married, was very charming, and was evidently determined to enjoy herself till she was exiled to her husband's dominions. The first victim to her charms was Monsieur, "who felt for her all the affection of which he was capable,"¹ and she was admitted to the honour of friendship with Madame the Duchesse d'Orléans. She and two or three other ladies—Madame de la Fayette being among the number—spent every afternoon with Madame ; followed her to Court, walked or drove with her, and returned to supper with her and Monsieur, while afterwards many of the courtiers came in, and the gay company amused themselves with music, cards, and acting.

In the summer Monsieur and Madame went to Fontainebleau, and all their intimates with them. There Madame bathed every day, driving down with her friends to the bathing place, and returning on horseback in a beautiful toilette, accompanied by the King and by all the young men of the Court. After supper the pleasure-seekers would get again into carriages, and spend part of the

¹ "La Fayette Mémoires."

night driving round the lake to the sound of violins. "In short, they amused themselves with all the delight possible, and with no mixture of sorrow." So says Madame de la Fayette cheerfully;¹ but surely, in the midst of all the excitement and gaiety, a prick at the heart occasionally reminded Madame that she had married a dissipated fop who cared nothing for her, the Princess of Monaco that she must soon leave the Court to follow to a foreign land a husband about whom she was absolutely indifferent, and Lauzun or Guiche that they had no chance of gaining the ladies for whom they sighed. Therefore every one's happiness must have been a relative term; but there is no doubt that they did their best to enjoy themselves, and managed to have a very gay and lively time.

Lauzun does not appear to have been in the least jealous of Monsieur, about whom he and his lady-love no doubt made many jests. The little man was passionately in love with Madame de Monaco and was really in earnest, so that he gained the reputation of being the prince of lovers, a relic of the past, a hero of romance, who had strayed from the pages of chivalry into a cynical modern Court. All the best qualities in his character came to the fore, while he devoted himself with enthusiasm to the service of the one woman for whom he felt passionate love. For though his creed and

¹ "Mémoires," p. 34.

period allowed him to indulge without apparent reproach in many passing "*affaires de cœur*," in his heart he seems to have been consistently faithful to the object of his first adoration. He had much on his hands at this period of his life, and he certainly managed his affairs astutely.

Besides being one of Madame's inner circle, and informed of all her secrets by the Princess of Monaco, who was her confidante as to Guiche's love for her, he was admitted to the privilege of intimacy with the Comtesse de Soissons,—first Madame's ally, and afterwards her bitter, unscrupulous enemy,—had sufficient cleverness to see the advisability of keeping up friendly relations with La Vallière when she was brought forward to distract gossip from the doings of the King and his sister-in-law, was protected by the Queen-mother for the sake of his cousin the Comtesse de Fleix, and at the same time managed to be on good terms with Colbert.

Assuredly the little man was clever, and possibly in these early days he was more careful not to show his claws than he became later in his life when his position was more assured. In 1661, a great trouble awaited him, for a year after her marriage it was at last considered advisable that Madame de Monaco should join her husband in Italy.

She stayed for the magnificent fête which the

unfortunate Fouquet gave to his Sovereign ; but from Nantes, where the Court moved after their visit to Vaux and the Controller was arrested, she was obliged to start to her future home in Italy.

She had a last interview with Monsieur, during which she implored him not to believe any stories which coupled the names of Madame and of her brother together, and tried to force a promise that the Comte de Guiche should never be exiled from the Court. To this request Monsieur—who was by this time very jealous—demurred, the lady lost her temper, and they separated on bad terms.

The idea of leaving the devoted Lauzun, however, filled her with the deepest grief, and in his hot determination to put off the parting as long as possible, he followed her on her journey in different disguises ; sometimes as a pedlar who offered her wares at the carriage window, and sometimes as the postillion who brought out fresh horses at the different stopping-places on her way to Italy.

At last, however, the separation could be no longer postponed, and Lauzun returned to Paris, and threw himself with restless energy into the business of intrigue, with gambling and love-making as amusements. When we read in Madame de la Fayette's *Memoirs* of the ceaseless plotting which went on at the Court of Madame, and remember that Lauzun—indefatigable at strategy, adroit, and secret

—was in the midst of it all, and was possessed, by his peculiar position as cousin to Guiche and lover of Guiche's sister, of peculiar powers of gaining information, we cannot help attributing part of the long chain of plots and counter-plots to his underground agency.

Meanwhile his sister, Mademoiselle de Lauzun, who was one of the Queen's ladies, and who, according to Saint-Simon, was as clever and intriguing,¹ though not as extraordinary as her brother, was going through adventures on her own account.

Two gentlemen, Monsieur d'Alluye and Monsieur de Nogent, were both in love with her. In a street fray, Nogent—helped by his lackeys—killed Alluye his rival, and, left conqueror in this inglorious battle, married the lady, without apparently receiving any punishment for murder or manslaughter.²

It is curious to see that, even at this period, the Grande Mademoiselle took a friendly interest in the family of the man who was eventually to have so great an effect on her fortunes.

In 1663, she had been exiled to Saint-Fargeau because of her refusal to marry the half-paralysed, drunken, and unhealthy King of Portugal. Bussy wrote to condole with her about this, and in her

¹ Chéruel, "Saint-Simon Mémoires," vol. xix. p. 180.

² Lalanne, "Mémoires de Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy," vol. ii. p. 140.

answer, dated April 3, 1663, she says: "It is true that people have sufficiently bad taste to fight for the hand of Mademoiselle de Lauzun, and not to do the same for Mademoiselle de Menneville" (a maid-of-honour of great beauty, but of doubtful character). "There seems something to moralise about in this."

The Grande Mademoiselle had already begun to observe the little Peguillin with an admiration which was to smoulder long, before it burst into flame with remarkable results.

On June 5, 1662,¹ a tournament took place at the Tuileries, and as the Grande Mademoiselle had never before seen such a thing, she considered it the most beautiful sight in the world. The King looked extremely distinguished and the master of everything, as indeed he always did; but the thing which made that tournament unforgettable for Mademoiselle de Montpensier was the device borne by Peguillin. The motto indeed was in Italian or Spanish, so that she could not decipher it exactly, but it was explained by the picture or body, which was a rocket mounting to the clouds, and seeming as though, if possible, it would rise even higher. Mademoiselle thought this a most noble device, and considered that it showed the elevation of Peguillin's soul.

The motto expressed the same sentiment as the

¹ Chéruel, "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iii. p. 550.

one severely reprobated by Louis XIV. when Fouquet had decorated his palace at Vaux in every available place with his arms—a squirrel, and the motto “*Quò non ascendam?*” (“To what height shall I not mount?”). But Lauzun was a privileged being, and although the King saw his favourite’s device, he made no objection to it.

That tournament was for long one of Mademoiselle’s happiest memories, and in her recollection of it everything seemed to centre round the device which proved the beauty of Lauzun’s mind with such delightful certainty.

A book was written about that celebrated tournament, and was published some years later (in 1670), when the Princess was no doubt one of the first to acquire a copy. However, the King possessed one long before its general publication, and one day, a year or two after it had taken place, when he was in bed for some trifling indisposition and Mademoiselle was in the room, he sent for the book, and she was able to study the pictures, and could feast her eyes on the noble device of the little man who “was like no one else.”

Many eyes besides those of Mademoiselle were fixed on that strange little personage, who, supported by no special talent except that of boundless self-confidence, wit, and, shall we say, impudence, had made himself to all intents and purposes King of the Court.

Only Louvois, the all-powerful Minister who hated him bitterly, and in the end was largely instrumental in bringing about his downfall, was equal to him in power.

Lauzun had, indeed, few friends and many enemies, as is the fate of favourites at Court or elsewhere. However, it may be said for the credit of humanity that jealousy of the preponderating influence he had attained with his royal master was not the only reason for the want of sympathy felt for him.

It was difficult for any one to feel kindly towards a man who, even if he were apparently his best friend, might turn on him at any moment—if his interest or humour so dictated—plant a stiletto in his heart by his cruel words, execute a pirouette on those high heels, which to many minds seem synonymous with stilted courtesy and perfect breeding, and leave his victim to digest in bitterness the humiliation he had suffered before many quizzical eyes. No redress was possible, for Peguillin's credit with his royal master was enormous, and his powers of repartee unbounded.

The year 1665 was the time of Lauzun's first reverse, the first check—if check it may be called—in the steady onward march of his career; and though slight, it might have warned him of the danger of an ungovernable temper to the man who wants to make his fortune, especially by means of

the favour of a selfish despot. Some sympathy may, however, in justice be accorded to him, for he was suffering from a terrible disillusionment. The Princess of Monaco was back at Court again; but what might have given Lauzun intense pleasure, was, instead, a cause of exquisite suffering. For "le Torrent"—as she is called by Madame de Sévigné, because, apparently, of her continual and indiscreet though amusing talk—was very fickle in her affections both for men and women. In a letter to her daughter written in 1672,¹ Madame de Sévigné says, speaking of Madame de Monaco's lovers, "What you say to me about the first [Lauzun] and the last is admirable; it is really an epigram." In short, Madame de Monaco was what was termed "galante"; and what Lauzun hoped would be the love of a life-time, was in her case merely the first and possibly not the most interesting of a series of "affaires de cœur." It is curious to see that Madame de Sévigné does not seem to have blamed her for this, though she considered it a distinct failure in depth of feeling when Madame de Monaco appeared to attach herself as deeply to the new Madame as she had to the dead Henriette, who had been her dearest friend. She remarks on this subject: "One is only rather angry to see her put on the same little airs and display the same pretty little ways with

† Letter, June 2, 1672.

this Madame as she did with the last.”¹ Even her brother’s death did not trouble Madame de Monaco long, which was not surprising, said Madame de Sévigné severely, as she had forgotten so much besides. In short, she was gay and fickle. Her affections, though violent, were not durable, and she was therefore the worst person in the world to be the object of a “grande passion.” She promised much ; but when her lover sought for something on which to depend, her feelings had changed, and some newer beau had usurped his place in her heart.

The pretext for her presence in Paris was her husband’s desire to claim sovereignty over the sea which bordered the State of Monaco. On this point the Prince was extremely tenacious, having already quarrelled with the Grand Duke of Tuscany about the taxes he wished to impose on ships driven by storm on to his territory.²

His talents did not, however, lie in the direction of diplomacy, and he hardly seems, from the description given by Saint-Simon, to have possessed the kind of personality likely to be able to exert much influence, or to be expert at gaining what he wanted. He was a fat young man, “as round as a barrel.” And he was very dull ; he could not see, to express the matter familiarly, beyond the end of his own nose. He was, besides, extremely vain, fantastic,

¹ Letter, October 21, 1673.

² “ Archives de la Bastille,” vol. iii. p. 451.

CHARLOTTE-ANTOINETTE DE GRAMONT
PRINCESS OF MONACO



From a contemporary picture.

CHARLOTTE-CATHERINE DE GRAMONT, PRINCESS OF MONACO.

and avaricious—in short, the worst person possible to gain his point with Louis XIV. It is not surprising that the Monarch turned from him in disgust, and refused to listen to his arguments.

At this point it was absolutely necessary for the Princess to intervene ; and as, in addition to her beauty, she possessed the fascination peculiar to the Gramont family, before many diplomatic interviews had taken place her charms had made an impression on the susceptible King. It was clearly a marital duty for the lady to show herself at her best before a man from whom she hoped for a favour from her husband ; but quick-sighted people who were jealous of the influence of La Vallière, began in secret to hope that the Princess might enter the lists and possibly in time supplant her.

Madame and the Comtesse de Soissons were in particular most anxious to help on the affair, for having put forward the unfortunate La Vallière as a dummy, they were dismayed at Louis' absolute devotion to her ; while, as to the gentle blue-eyed La Vallière, even the cynical Comte de Bussy says "she would have loved the King as much if she had been a great Queen and he a simple gentleman."¹ Her feelings, however, did not count with the great ladies who plotted her destruction.

Lauzun, his quick eyes and acute senses still further sharpened by his love and consequent jealousy,

¹ Lalanne, "Mémoires de Roger de Rabutin," vol. ii. p. 3.

was scheming in the opposite direction. He had been the first to suspect what was in the wind ; for, as l'Abbé Choisy remarks, "when we love truly, we see very clearly," and he determined to find some one who would supplant Madame de Monaco in the King's affections, and who would exercise stronger dominion over him than the gentle La Vallière could do.

Looking round upon the Court beauties to find some one suitable for his purpose, his keen eyes fell on Madame de Montespan, then a beautiful and fascinating young woman of five-and-twenty. He brought her forward as much as possible, and praised her beauty continually to the King,¹ while the lady herself attacked Louis with all the arts in her power. For a time the King seemed absolutely indifferent to her wiles, and the intrigue did not succeed in its object of detaching him from Madame de Monaco.

As Lauzun's scheme did not progress as he had hoped, and his suspicions were causing him acute anguish, he determined at least to find out the truth, despair being preferable in his eyes to the torture of uncertainty. He was lavish with his money, and would bribe generously to gain information ; besides, people were so much afraid of him that it was easy for him to worm secrets out

¹ De la Beaumelle, "*Mémoires de Madame de Maintenon*," vol. i. p. 258.

of them. He suborned Madame de Monaco's trusted maid, and paid her three thousand pistoles for the information that on a certain day, Bontemps, the King's first valet, was to lead Madame de Monaco by the back passages at Saint-Germain to meet the King.

Burning with rage and jealousy, Peguillin determined at any cost to put a stop to this interview.

The way to the meeting-place was by a small staircase, and it had been arranged that Madame de Monaco should be conducted along this by Bontemps, and should enter the King's room by a private door. Fortunately for Peguillin's purpose, close to the door was a small closet. Before the time of the proposed interview, he left the King's apartments, unobserved, by this door, double locked it behind him, and, taking out the key, shut himself into the little room, ready, as soon as he heard steps, to put his eye to the keyhole. Punctually to the appointed time arrived Madame de Monaco and Bontemps, and the latter began at once to feel for the key, which he expected to find in the lock. Of course it was missing, and Peguillin listened with malicious delight to his agitated exclamations.

The matter was serious ;—every matter was serious in which the King's will or pleasure was concerned. Bontemps hunted excitedly in his pockets—could he have put the key there? No.

The situation was terrible. What was he to do with the lady, if a trick had been played? To knock would be dangerous, for some one might be passing and hear the noise. Nevertheless, the position of affairs was so desperate that he risked the danger of discovery, tapped once or twice softly without effect, and at last so loudly that the King heard and came to the door. Bontemps explained excitedly, but in a low voice, that the lady was outside, and begged him to open at once, because the key was not on the staircase side of the door. The King replied that he put it there, and Bontemps began to hunt for it on the ground, while the royal lover tried vainly to draw back the bolt. Impossible; the door was double locked. What *could* have happened? Louis and Madame de Monaco began to talk in a low voice through the door, the jealous lover not losing a word of the colloquy, to which he listened with feelings of intense rage, mingled with malicious joy at the disgust of the baffled couple, so near each other, yet so effectually sundered.¹

The conversation was short, the position being certainly untenable for long, and the disappointed King and Madame de Monaco were obliged to separate, each inveighing bitterly, though no doubt

¹ This account is taken from Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 318; "Choisy Mémoires," vol. ii. p. 61; and Chéruel, "Saint-Simon Mémoires," vol. xx. p. 176.

in a low voice, against the extraordinary mischance which had befallen them.

After this Peguillin determined to have an explanation with the Princess. He was evidently in one of the black rages referred to by Madame de Sévigné, for on visiting the lady and finding her out, he gave vent to his feelings by smashing a valuable looking-glass in her sitting-room.¹ When he *did* find her at home a most violent scene took place, in which he reproached her indignantly for her faithlessness, and threatened to show the King letters which would, he said, ruin her. Determined to be the first in the field, she went at once to Louis XIV. with complaints of his conduct, and as a result of her imputations his Majesty suddenly appeared to have become extremely anxious about his regiments of dragoons stationed in Béarn, and thought it necessary that they should at once be inspected by their Colonel. Peguillin, however, was in no hurry to start, and was impervious to hints and even to commands. In the end the King spoke with some heat, and said that if his commands were not obeyed within twenty-four hours, he would know what to do.² The idea of leaving Paris under these circumstances was of course insupportable to Lauzun, and for the moment he hated the selfish despot who con-

¹ Bussy-Rabutin, "Histoire amoureuse des Gaules," vol. ii. p. 53.

² *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 53.

sidered he had the right of the strong over everything he chose to covet.

Beside himself with rage, he cried that he would rather give up his post than leave Paris at present, and that he had his resignation ready in his pocket. Then, drawing his sword and breaking it over his knee, he exclaimed that he would never again draw a weapon in the service of a King who could behave as Louis had done.

The King, though almost as furious by this time as Lauzun, behaved with admirable self-control. Turning away at once, he opened the window and threw away his cane, saying,—“for fear that I should have to reproach myself with striking a gentleman,” and left the room.

The next day, Peguillin, who had not dared to approach his royal master since his outbreak of passion, was arrested in his room and conducted to the Bastille.¹ Had he been wise, he would have considered this check in his career as a warning, and would have thought his time in prison well employed in trying to control the fiery temper which was eventually to ruin his fortunes.

¹ From the Venetian Ambassador's letter to the Doge of August 1665 (see vol. ii. p. 451 of “Archives de la Bastille”), it is clearly proved that the fit of passion which caused Puyguilhem's arrest was caused by his jealousy about Madame de Monaco, and that he was not imprisoned in the Bastille in 1670 after his failure to obtain the Grand Mastership of the Artillery, as Saint-Simon, writing long afterwards, asserts.

On the other hand, the Princess cannot have felt very comfortable ; for, as she well knew, when a man was under arrest his papers were at the disposal of the King, and she was aware that among Lauzun's collection were some referring to matters in which she was concerned, which it was greatly to her interest to keep secret.

CHAPTER VII

Description of the Bastille—Bussy-Rabutin and Vardes also there
—Reasons for Lauzun's imprisonment as announced throughout Europe—His release—His revenge on Madame de Monaco
—The King defends him.

AT that period the Bastille was not, at any rate to those who made a temporary sojourn there, the gloomy and terrible prison we are sometimes accustomed to picture to ourselves when we think of the stronghold of despotism.

The popular imagination credited it, even up to Louis XVI.'s time, with horrors which had long been banished from its precincts. Compared with other prisons of the same date in France and elsewhere, it was remarkably humane and well managed, and great precautions were taken to prevent wrongful incarcerations ; the orders for arrest being signed by the King and countersigned by a Minister, and a receipt being given by the Governor when a prisoner arrived.¹

As a further precaution against all possible abuses, a special Minister was appointed to take charge of the Bastille, whose duty it was to superintend the

¹ For a full account of the Bastille, see Introduction in vol. i. of Ravaisson's "Archives de la Bastille."

expenses and to know each day what prisoners were admitted, and by which Minister's authority the arrests had been made. This was a distinguished office, and was held during Louis XIV.'s reign by Colbert, Seignelay, and the two Pontchartrains in turn. No torture was allowed, except the trial by water and the boot ; and in the case of women, only the boot was used.

Altogether, the old citadel was in many ways a model prison for the seventeenth century, and its evil reputation, and the enormous significance of its destruction as a proof that liberty was for the future to be the rule in France, did not spring from any particular abuses in its management, but from deeper and more permanent causes. Chief among these was the fact that it was the citadel of Royalty, the key to despotic government.

From Vincennes, where the King could retire in the case of any disturbance in Paris, he could signal across the valley to the Governor of the Bastille. And the master of the Bastille was the master of Paris. Hence its prestige. Hence, too, indirectly, its terrible reputation, and the ghastly legends which gathered round "the frowning Bastille."

It was built in a long square, and was quite at the outskirts of the city, one side of it being separated from the country only by a dry ditch. Another face looked towards the Seine, and a third towards the square where the Column of July now stands.

The fortress was entered by the end of the rue Saint-Antoine, whence a passage—bordered by a few shops and to the left by the Governor's barracks and stables—led to a drawbridge called l'Avance, which was open during the day but closed at night. No one might stop in this passage or loiter along it, and a sentinel and guards were placed near the drawbridge to prevent the populace from assembling to see the prisoners pass through.

A bell announced the arrival of a prisoner, and once through the drawbridge he found himself in the Governor's Court. At the further end of the court was another drawbridge, strengthened by a cage of beams covered with iron, and after passing the sentries stationed here, the prisoner found himself in the prisoners' court, which was 120 feet by 80 feet.

Opposite, was a large house divided into two by a passage and a staircase. The ground floor of this was devoted to the prison kitchens and the refectory, and on the first floor were lodged prisoners who were allowed comparative liberty, while the King's Lieutenant occupied the second floor, and could thus, without leaving his rooms, see everything which went on in the court below. Unless it were necessary that the prisoner should be questioned by the Lieutenant-General of Police, he was received by the King's Lieutenant, taken by him to the Governor, and thence to the apartment prepared for him.

If the new arrival stood with his back to the drawbridge and faced the house occupied by the King's Lieutenant, the lodgings of the less strictly guarded prisoners were to his extreme right, and on the same side of the court were three towers called Comté, Trésor, and La Chapelle. On the same side of the court were the corresponding towers, known as La Bazinière, La Bertaudière, and Liberté, the last name sounding curious under the circumstances. Between these towers were the chapel and the shops.

The courtyard was not at all gloomy, and the scenes which passed in it would not coincide with our modern ideas of the order and silence of prison life—in fact it more resembled a college enclosure, being thronged with people who talked, and laughed, and amused themselves with games.

Another smaller court contained the Governor's farmyard, and rubbish was thrown into the well in the middle of it.

The greatest precautions were taken to ensure the safety of the inmates.

An officer went over the fortress and into each of the prisons at irregular hours, and put a counter in a box each time, so that the Governor should know that his round had been taken. Sentinels, relieved every two hours, watched the windows, and other sentinels told the guard what was going on in the streets from hour to hour, that they

might be prepared in the case of any popular rising. It is little to be wondered at that the Bastille was hated as the stronghold of despotism, for what chance had rebellion against its massive walls and systematised vigilance?

Inside, the prisoners seem to have lived for the most part comfortably, even luxuriously. There were indeed dungeons at the bottom of each tower which would satisfy the popular idea of life in the Bastille, for the only air admitted to them came from a grating which looked on to a dry ditch round the Bastille. These were most unhealthy, for when the Seine overflowed they were flooded by the water which came in through these apertures. Occasionally, too, a chain was fastened in the middle of the dungeon, and to this the prisoner was fastened. In justice, however, to the humanity of the Bastille authorities, it must be stated that these horrible cellars were not used as normal dwelling-places; they were places of special punishment used only for the recalcitrant, and no one was ever confined in them for long.

The first-floor rooms in each tower were octagonal, with big fireplaces and double doors. To see out of the barred windows the prisoner had to mount three steps cut out of the ten-foot-thick wall. He was generally allowed books, and had permission to walk in the courtyard.

At the time when Lauzun was confined in the

Bastille, none of the rooms were furnished, and the prisoners were obliged to go to the Bastille tradespeople—who mulcted them exorbitantly—for whatever they required. However, in 1709 some of the rooms were fitted with necessaries at the royal expense.

The most usual punishment for slight offences was deprivation of part of the food provided ; any regimen as severe as bread and water being only very seldom adopted. The usual fare was extremely good, and so abundant that most of the prisoners could not manage to eat all that was provided for them. The courses at dinner comprised soup, entrée, joint, dessert, and two bottles of wine—either burgundy or champagne. At last the prisoners agreed among themselves that they would live more simply, and would share what was over of the money provided by the King for their sustenance. As a result of this arrangement many who had entered the Bastille poor emerged from it rich.

When Lauzun arrived at the Bastille in July 1665, he found Madame de Sévigné's cousin, the Comte de Bussy-Rabutin, already imprisoned there. Bussy was imprisoned for having written "*L'Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*," and also because the King was tired of hearing complaints of his bitter witty tongue, which continually raised enemies against him. He had been shut up since April, and he tells us

in his Memoirs¹ that he rejoiced when he heard of Lauzun's disgrace, as he hoped that this later excitement would cause his own misdeeds to be forgotten.

Vardes was also in prison, as a chastisement for the offence of speaking lightly of Madame ; but the punishment meted out to him was not heavy, as all his friends were allowed to visit him.

The discipline to which Lauzun had to submit for having insulted his royal master was far more severe, for on July 18, 1665, Le Tellier wrote to Monsieur de Besmans, the Governor of the Bastille, to say that his Majesty wished Monsieur de Puyguilhem to have no intercourse—either by voice or letter—with any one as long as he was in the Bastille, and ordered that he should be allowed no servant of his own ; but that a soldier, or some prisoner to whom he would not be likely to talk, should attend on him. Bussy tells us with evident satisfaction that Lauzun was treated with much more rigour than he was, and that he was not even allowed a valet. Evidently Louis was afraid of awkward revelations if the little man were still in a rampant condition.

Meanwhile Bussy employed his too ample leisure in composing a poem addressed to the King from himself, Vardes, and Peguillin, whom he calls the three incarcerated lovers, imploring his Majesty's

¹ "Mémoires de Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy," p. 231.

clemency. This effusion did not soften the King's heart towards the author of it, for he was kept in prison for a year, became dangerously ill from despair, and was then released, but only to be exiled for many years to his estates in Burgundy. Vardes was set free sooner than his companion in misfortune, but was also exiled.

Puyguilhem's arrest—or rather the causes for it—made a sensation throughout Europe.

Sagredo, the Venetian Ambassador, wrote thus to the Doge on the subject :¹

“ MOST SERENE PRINCE,—Monsieur de Puyguilhem, Colonel-general of Dragoons, has by order of the King been taken to the Bastille. People say that this may have some connection with the imprisonment of the Marquis de Vardes, but others assert that the Lieutenant of the Colonel's company having been sent with fifty horse into Béarn to punish the temerity of one of the principal leaders of the rebels, named Andijos, and having met him in a forest on foot, only accompanied by twelve brigands, this officer allowed him time to retreat into a house some distance from there ; after having laid siege to it, the Lieutenant was obliged to abandon his enterprise, leaving many of his men dead or wounded, and it is said that the King reproached Puyguilhem with this action, considering it almost a crime of

¹ Ravaisson, “ Archives de la Bastille,” vol. ii. p. 437.

the Lieutenant not to have killed the miserable man, or at least to have made him prisoner in the forest ; that Puyguilhem spoke with some heat in justifying this officer, and therefore the King was irritated into giving this order. I keep to this version, to exclude the idea generally spread abroad that Puyguilhem had received the order to go to Béarn with the office of Lieutenant-general, and that blinded by ungovernable passion he lost his temper sufficiently to break his sword, instead of thanking the King for the kind nomination, which he had honoured him by bestowing personally.

“ PARIS, *July* 31, 1665.”

This is evidently the official account of the incident ; but about a fortnight later the real facts of the case had leaked out, and on August 14, Sagredo wrote another letter, in which he told the Doge of the love-affair between the Princess of Monaco and the King. He also said that when Puyguilhem's papers were inspected, several grave matters had come to light which had destroyed the King's fleeting admiration for the charming Princess.

To explain these matters, we must return to the intrigues surrounding Henriette d'Orléans. The Comte de Guiche had been exiled to the Hague because the Comtesse de Soissons, furious at being deprived by Madame's agency of her lover Vardes,¹ had shown

¹ “ La Fayette Mémoires,” p. 99.

letters to the King accusing Guiche of wishing to hand Dunkirk over to the English, and of offering Madame his regiment of Guards to assist in this enterprise.

Guiche was in despair at the idea of leaving Madame. Whether on her side the love-affair between them were play or not, to him it was an earnest and serious matter. Following Lauzun's example, he disguised himself in La Vallière's liveries to be able to speak again to his adored one, and when they parted for the last time he fainted.

The presence of so ardent a lover was likely to cause a scandal sooner or later, especially where the reckless Henriette was concerned, and the King was delighted to get Guiche removed to a safe distance. He was therefore horrified when among Puyguilhem's papers he came across some which showed that through the Princess of Monaco's agency a courier had been sent secretly by the Comte de Guiche to Madame, and that this courier was now at the Court under the pretext that he had come to see Madame de Monaco. Puyguilhem had, as we know, threatened his faithless lady-love with the production of these letters.

Although, as Sagredo says smoothly, "the King has better appreciated his sister-in-law's rare merits since the last intrigues, and especially as, since the Restoration of the Royal House from which she springs, her range of intellect has become known, that

does not prevent the fact that confused rumours about the Comte de Guiche make many precautions necessary, exiled though he is."

Louis was therefore very angry when he discovered the intrigue in progress, and the following letter from Puyguilhem to Colbert causes the reader to suspect that it was not altogether by chance that he found the incriminating letters, but that the injured lover had after all managed successfully to revenge himself upon the faithless lady.

It may be noted, before giving the letter *in extenso*, that Puyguilhem should by rights have written for anything he wanted to Louvois, who had signed the order for his arrest, and under whose jurisdiction he naturally came as an officer; but Louvois was so openly his enemy that he preferred to apply for assistance to Colbert, with whom he had at this time only a slight acquaintance, but who was not unfriendly to him.

" August 1665.

" SIR,—I have so little the honour of being known by you, and I feel so worthy of punishment, that I fear much that the liberty which I am taking in begging you very humbly to be good enough to take the trouble to give a letter to his Majesty, or to cause it to be given to him, may be tiresome to you. But, sir, I hope that you will not refuse me this charity, as the small amount of intercourse

I have with the people who possess the honour of approaching his Majesty in private, obliges me to have recourse to you ; begging you, Sir, not to deny me this charity, which is the greatest kindness that it is possible to do me, and which will cause me during the whole of my life to endeavour with care to find occasions to repay it ; assuring you, sir, that it is the greatest pleasure that you can give to an unfortunate who will be eternally yours," etc.¹

However, whether it was by chance or by design that Louis discovered the intrigue which was intended to re-establish communication between Madame and the Comte de Guiche, the immediate effect of his irritation and alarm was that the Princess of Monaco lost all the influence she had gained, and that he turned with renewed affection to the gentle La Vallière, who loved him truly, and never gave him cause for anxiety by her intrigues.

Meanwhile Lauzun was filled with rage and despair. His active spirit was chafed to the verge of madness by the solitary confinement to which he was subjected ; and the knowledge that he owed this disgrace, and probably the downfall of his life's ambitions, to the woman on whom he had concentrated the depth of his ardent affection, must have mightily increased his desperation.

He would abase himself, eat his words, flatter

¹ Ravaisson, " Archives de la Bastille," vol. ii. p. 452.

with the utmost servility, would do anything, in short, however degrading, to obtain freedom. He therefore pretended to be overwhelmed with the heinous nature of his crime, and implored further punishment, begging for chains and fetters. He even refused to shave while he was away from his royal master, and, to the amusement of the Court, emerged from prison at the end of three months with the beard of a Carmelite friar. "One must never resist the King," was his continual refrain; "one must obey him and follow him, as a dog follows his master."¹

Such docility could not remain for ever unrewarded, especially as the King no longer cared for Madame de Monaco; and in December 1665 Lauzun was released from durance vile, and returned to Court to ruffle it with the best of them.

He had learnt his lesson; never again would he seek to rival the King in any lady's affections. He therefore bore himself towards Louis with a proud nobility of bearing, mingled with adroit flattery, which were absolutely effective in convincing him of his natural independence of spirit, and yet of his absolute devotion to the person of his Sovereign; so that, to Louvois' rage, he was in a short time more firmly fixed in the position of friend and favourite than he had been before his imprisonment.

Nevertheless, his rancour towards Madame de

¹ "Vie des Religieuses de Port-Royal," vol. iv. p. 208.

Monaco was unabated, and the revenge he took on her was strange, and highly characteristic of his peculiar character.

On a day in May about three months after Lauzun's release, Madame and her ladies were sitting with the rest of the Court, on wooden planks laid on the ground in the great hall at Versailles, and were watching a game which was being played for stakes of considerable value.

It was very hot, and Madame de Monaco was half reclining, with one hand, palm upwards, resting on the grass. Peguillin came up to her, and, smiling, began to pay her some trifling compliment. Still smiling, he planted his high pointed heel—one of those heels which are considered by some the symbols of a past age of high-bred chivalry—in the hollow of her hand, pirouetted to press more firmly on it, and turned away to favour some other lady with his attentions.

The pain was so great that the Princess nearly fainted, and thought she was crippled for life. She had, however, sufficient courage to make no outcry at the moment, for she was, like most people, afraid of Peguillin, and she felt herself in the wrong; so, though later she wept over his cruelty, at the moment she contented herself with showing her injured fingers to the ladies around her.

Lauzun had left the place at once, as though unconscious of the accident; but when he was

told of it, he surpassed himself in horror, regret, and in profuse apologies for his stupidity. No one was deceived, however, nor did the perpetrator of the outrage intend that they should be, for he laughed and boasted openly to his intimates about the way in which he had revenged himself.

There was a great outcry about the incident, in which the unfortunate Prince of Monaco, the Duc de Gramont, and the Comte de Guiche joined ; the whole family feeling itself insulted by the outrage offered to one of its members. Nothing, however, could be done to punish the offender, for he was protected by the King ; and from the perusal of the following letter one may fancy that even if Louis did not use Lauzun as his agent, he was at any rate in sympathy with him when he punished the woman who had dared to deceive, not only the comparatively insignificant Peguillin, but the Sun-God, Louis-le-Grand, as well.

The King to the Comte d'Estrades

" SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE,¹ May 19, 1666.

" M. LE COMTE D'ESTRADES,²—I am sending this courier to you in haste, and have ordered him to travel as quickly as possible, that he may reach you before the Prince of Monaco, who left Paris yesterday by post to go to the Hague, can arrive there.

¹ Ravaillon, " Archives de la Bastille," vol. iii. p. 14.

² The Comte d'Estrades was Chargé d'Affaires at the Hague.

The subject which obliges me to do this is solely the friendship and kindness I feel for the Maréchal de Gramont, and for all his house ; and you will easily see yourself that in this matter I am acting as a private person and not as King. For in the last-named character, I should allow everything to take its course without interference, and should eventually punish severely those who had offended me by infringing my edicts, or the laws of my kingdom. To explain all this to you I must go back, must relate a fact to you as it happened, and acquaint you with its consequences, which may become much more serious, if people continue to take things as perversely as they have done till now.

“You must know, then, that last Monday at Versailles, they were playing in the drawing-room for a jewel worth twelve hundred pistoles, and for coolness the ladies were sitting on the ground on a clean plank. I was standing, and was watching the game with some attention to see who would win. It happened that as I went two paces back to see better, those who were between me and the wall were obliged to move, among them Puyguilhem, who, leaving this place hastily to give me room, unfortunately stepped by mistake on Madame de Monaco's hand, which she had placed, as I have already said, on the ground to support herself, but which was covered by her

skirt, so that it was impossible to see it—a most important circumstance when you hear what followed. The said Princess looked at her fingers for some time and showed them to the ladies around her, complaining that she had been hurt ; and suddenly, having raised her voice and exclaimed that it was Puyguilhem who had stepped on her hand, she began to cry, got up, threw a book which she was reading angrily to the ground, and retired into another room, where she wept for a long time, in the presence of several people, who could not calm her or make her realise that the affair had been a pure accident, without any possible design of vexing her, still less of injuring her. Puyguilhem, on his side, did everything he could to show his despair at what had happened, and offered not only to give all possible satisfaction, although it had been a pure mishap, but to throw himself out of the window on the spot, if that would content the said Princess and make her understand how far he had been from any intention of annoying her.

“ Meanwhile the Maréchal de Gramont was informed by Castellan of what had happened ; but before it had been possible to explain the circumstances to him, he became very angry, declaring that on certain occasions honour obliged a man to throw aside prudence and revenge himself whatever might happen, even if he and his whole family were to perish. I spoke to all of them in terms

of friendship, to try to make them hear reason, because I thought I ought to do this to prevent a trifle, in which there had been no insult nor intention to offer one, from causing a great misfortune, which would oblige me necessarily to punish a family of which I am fond, for the violence they might commit from too great haste and passion ; and it seemed to me that the Maréchal became more composed after what I had said to him, so that I hoped that the affair would at least stop there, without making more excitement than it had already done, which was already too much, considering all the talk it had caused, and which would have been best avoided. However, I have just heard that, contrary to my wishes and hopes, the Prince of Monaco has been advised in Paris to go to the Hague to consult the Comtes of Guiche and of Louvigny about what should be done in the affair, so as not to let the affront go unpunished, which Puyguilhem has, they assert, perpetrated on the person of his wife.

“ Here is a narrative of the facts, about which I must now tell you that it seems to me that never has advice been more foolish than that which has impelled the Prince to make this journey ; which (unless you can remedy things in time by your good sense) obliges him to action for nothing ; in which the offence is imaginary ; which will rouse the greatest resentment, and will perhaps make him commit violence which will oblige me, much against

my will, to punish the said Prince very severely, as well as all those who have had any part in the matter.

“Put all this before the Prince ; make him listen more reasonably than he has in the past.

“Put it before the Comte de Guiche, and tell him from me, that though I have no cause to be satisfied with his past conduct, I have enough affection for his father, and enough still remaining for himself, not to wish him, if I can help it, to saddle himself with a very serious affair, which might ruin him hopelessly as well as all those engaged in it.

“Say the same thing to the Comte de Louvigny, and do not leave these young fellows to their own counsel. I quite understand that, after the excitement made by the Prince of Monaco, it will be difficult for them to return to reasonable ideas, as they will think that their honour has been so much engaged by this step that they must do something.

“But by reason of my goodwill towards them, I have thought of a means you may take to free them from this necessity, without its being possible that the slightest scruple can remain in their minds about honour ; and to do this, after having talked to them as a true friend would do, you are to tell them all from me, and by my order as King, that I have taken the trouble to examine the affair myself ; to find out from Puyguilhem, and also from others

who were present, whether there could possibly have been any design on his part to injure or to annoy the Princess of Monaco in what he did ; and that I have proved to myself without doubt, that not only had he no such design, but that he was at once—and is still—really in despair about what has happened by simple mischance.

“ You will add that I assure them all of this truth by the faith and word of a King, and will then point out to them that this declaration made by me will be, to all persons of good sense, a greater satisfaction than any they could derive from any other source, because it does away with and destroys all the foundation of the pretended offence ; and as this declaration—which I make to-day—is a new fact which was not in existence when the Prince of Monaco left here, there will be no difficulty for him in saying, in all honour, that it has stopped the resentment which he would have felt from the insult which he thought he had received, if so great a testimony as mine had not assured him of the contrary.

“ Nevertheless, as the sending of this special envoy and this letter show that in my goodwill I wish to save two families who may otherwise ruin themselves through their own folly, it may also serve one day as a strong piece of evidence to increase the blackness of the folly and imprudence of those who may have abused my goodness.”

(Addition in the King's own handwriting.)

“I forgot to tell you that if in the inquiry I have made, I had been led to the slightest suspicion that Puyguilhem could have been impudent enough to do such a thing on purpose, I should have punished him severely, because the injury would have been done against myself more than against any one else, and as I, with full knowledge of the facts, am satisfied, every one else ought to be likewise.”

After this, what could the Gramont family possibly do? They were helpless. So the storm blew harmlessly over Puyguilhem's apparently invulnerable head, and, secure in his royal master's protection, he proceeded gaily on his pursuit of advancement.

CHAPTER VIII

Grand Review—Lauzun's love-affairs—King's growing indifference for La Vallière—Madame de Montespan's career; her connection with the poisoners — Alliance between Lauzun and Madame de Montespan—War with Flanders—Madame de Montespan ousts La Vallière—Lauzun's prowess in Flanders—Louis conquers Franche-Comté.

THE King was intensely fond of military reviews, and in the year 1666 he summoned the dragoons to Fontainebleau for the purpose of having a grand fête. The troops were installed between the Park and the Mall. All the Court ladies went out to see them, and every one lauded to the skies the reserved little man with the modest yet dignified manner who commanded them. This praise was judicious, Peguillin being prime favourite with his royal master; besides, most courtiers had experience of the cruel remarks which he was capable of making without altering the soft tones of his carefully modulated voice.

It was decided that a grand review should take place on the open ground near Moret, and that the Court ladies should be installed for three days in tents of all the colours of the rainbow,¹ and

¹ "Journal d'Olivier d'Ormesson," vol. ii. p. 462.

should be diverted by the sight of a properly conducted siege. Malcontents—of whom there were many, says Olivier d'Ormesson—grumbled, possibly at the expense, saying that the affair was merely a children's game ; but foreigners, we are told, were suspicious, and some people considered that a descent on Flanders was in contemplation.

Peguilin was in high favour. The Grande Mademoiselle did not go to the camp, for which omission she was afterwards sorry, but she heard much of the dashing dragoon Colonel. There was a great deal of chatter and excitement at Court about a visit which the King paid to his tents. He found them most elegantly and magnificently furnished, and although he was accompanied by his own regiment of Guards, his devoted servitor, as if to make his royal master's safety doubly sure, mounted guard at the head of his troops in each tent he visited.

Remembering Louis' character, it is not surprising that rather later Mademoiselle read in the *Gazette* that other regiments of dragoons had been formed, and that Lauzun had been made Colonel-General of the whole force.

The Grande Mademoiselle says that she was not well acquainted with Monsieur de Peguillin at this time, but—as we know—she had for some time taken much interest in him, and doubtless had often thought of the tournament of 1662, and

of the rocket which mounted to the skies. She had had much time for reflection, for a few months after the tournament she had been exiled for an action which did her honour—her refusal to marry the profligate and idiotic King of Portugal, who was not then twenty years old¹—and could neither read nor write. In March 1664, after an exile of eighteen months, she was allowed to return to Paris because Louis wished her to become the wife of the Duke of Savoy, who, by the death of her half-sister, Mademoiselle de Valois, had been left a widower in January 1664, after only a few months of married life.

On her return to Court, Louis began to tease her about her exile. "Allow," he said, "that you have been very much bored."² But Mademoiselle, who had in reality been in despair—first at Saint-Fargeau and then at Eu—answered coldly that she had not been in the least dull, and that whenever she thought about the matter, she reflected how much deceived the people at Court were if they expected to mortify her.

Nothing more was heard of her proposed marriage with the Duke of Savoy, who was evidently not enthusiastic when the proposition was put to him, and on May 11, 1665, the Duke married Made-

¹ See "Louis XIV. et La Grande Mademoiselle," Arvède Barine, p. 150.

² "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 4.

moiselle de Nemours, thus making a match which—according to the Grande Mademoiselle—was not of sufficient dignity for the house of Savoy.

Whether the Grande Mademoiselle regretted her failure to become Duchess of Savoy, or whether she had only assented to the proposal when it was put to her by the King for fear that a second exile would follow her refusal to obey his orders, we do not know. A certain acerbity in her tone when she speaks of sisters who became respectively Duchess of Savoy and Queen of Portugal, may be traced to the fact that both these ladies had been desperately in love with Lauzun, and that the younger one, who became Queen of Portugal, had drawn his horoscope, and had been in despair when it was told her that she would make by marriage the most splendid fortune imaginable. As there was not much money in the family, the sisters determined to draw lots for the hand of Lauzun. This business must have been intensely exciting, for the one who lost would have to enter a convent, as it would be impossible for either of them to marry any one except the brilliant and fascinating Peguillin, and all the money available would be required to provide the winner with a suitable dot. The momentous wager was made; the younger sister won, and promptly proposed to Lauzun. He was, however, still attached to the beautiful Princess of Monaco, and refused the

proffered honour, saying that the King did not approve of his accepting it.

Bussy-Rabutin's opinion was certainly true when he said that Peguillin, though insignificant in looks and figure, possessed some mysterious quality which made any woman who once knew him prefer him to every one else.

Mademoiselle's Memoirs at this time give the impression that she was rather mortified at remaining unmarried while the tide of life and change passed by her, and her former inferiors became queens and reigning duchesses. The golden days of youth were over, and the Grande Mademoiselle was tired of her position. Moreover, her precedence, which was half her life to her, was not what it had been ; and in the future not only the King's but also Monsieur's daughters would walk into the room before her. These were serious griefs to one in her position and of her temperament. The emptiness and vanity of life pressed on the Grande Mademoiselle, and even the serious reading and writing with which she tried to solace her involuntary quiet and leisure did not satisfy her. She wanted something more.

Meanwhile the King had for some time begun to tire of La Vallière. The death of Anne of Austria (January 1666), after intense sufferings borne with exemplary fortitude, had removed the only person who was any obstacle to his carrying on his love

affairs exactly as he listed. Latterly, indeed, the Queen-mother had been so powerless that she could hardly be called an obstacle, her objections being of no avail, and only serving to alienate her son. Though he was fond of her, in the end her death was a relief to him, and by a sad irony of fate it was a relief also to the foolish little daughter-in-law towards whom she had always played the part of a most devoted mother. People had told Marie-Thérèse that she would gain importance at the death of the Queen-mother, to whom the King insisted that she should always give precedence. A year later the poor creature had discovered her mistake, and wept bitterly with Madame de Motteville over the death of her best friend.¹

The King, as we have said, was tiring of La Vallière, but this did not mean that his wife would reap the benefit of the change, or that he had any intention of relinquishing the delights of illegitimate love. With Lauzun as an ally, one of the most remarkable women of her time was worming herself into Louis' affections, and was unscrupulously making use of all means, even the most revolting, to gain her object and to become his mistress. Lauzun was intensely anxious to bring her forward as counterpoise to the attractions of Madame de Monaco. Her fortunes are so inextricably mixed up with his, and she is so decidedly the villain in his life's

¹ Petitot, "Motteville Mémoires," vol. xl. p. 296.

history, that it seems necessary to devote a little attention to her personality and adventures.

Françoise-Athénaïs de Rochechouart was born in 1641 at the castle of Tonnay-Charente, and was daughter to the Duc de Montemart. She had three sisters, and the names of two of them—the Abbess of Fontevrault and Madame de Thianges, appear continually in the memoirs of the times. All three sisters were charming and beautiful, and they all—according to Saint-Simon—possessed the Montemart wit, which was like no other in the world. Saint-Simon indeed waxes really eloquent on the subject of Madame de Montespan. He says: “It was not possible to have more elegant politeness, individuality in expressing oneself, eloquence, and natural tact, which gave her a delicious language peculiar to herself.”¹

The future Madame de Montespan came to Court in 1660, and became one of the newly married Queen’s maids-of-honour. She was then perfectly beautiful, with abundant fair hair, blue eyes with dark eyebrows and lashes, a very pretty mouth, brilliant complexion, and a charming laugh. When we add to these physical attractions her talent for singing and her keen sense of fun, which found vent in playfully piquant sallies, it will be realised that she was almost irresistible whenever she chose to exercise her attractions. At all events she was a

¹ Chéruel, “Saint-Simon Mémoires,” vol. v. p. 263.

delightful companion, and women as well as men fell under the power of her charms ; for it must be noted she never made the mistake of despising her own sex—at any rate when they might be useful to her. On January 28, 1663, she was married to the Marquis de Montespan, who was a year younger than herself, and had in quick succession two children, whose birth seems hardly to have interrupted her round of gaieties. Only one of these survived—and became the Duc d'Antin, whom Sainte-Beuve dubs the prince of courtiers.

She was remarkably clever. She charmed and fascinated the Grande Mademoiselle, whose *Memoirs* are full of remarks which show how much she, though not generally enthusiastic about anybody, enjoyed the society of the fascinating beauty. Everybody laughed and made fun of it. “Madame de Montespan knows how to do that better than any one else in the world !” cries the Princess admiringly. She could be serious, too ; and when the Queen received an anonymous letter, the contents of which she did not believe, telling her of Madame de Montespan's relations towards the King, the accused lady spoke to the Grande Mademoiselle most feelingly of the kindness shown to her by her royal mistress, of the gratitude she felt in consequence, and of the impossibility that she could ever think of injuring her.¹

¹ Chéruei, “*Montpensier Mémoires*,” vol. iv. p. 58.

The Queen was at first extremely fond of Madame de Montespan, and, even when she discovered the truth, she does not seem to have felt the dislike for her that she did for La Vallière. No doubt she had now become more used to the situation, and had realised the fact that she had had the misfortune to marry a man who would never remain true to one woman. Besides, the Montespan was so insinuating, respectful, and amusing, that it was difficult to hate her. Before the knowledge of the presence of the King in the field caused general flight among her humble lovers, she had naturally many admirers ; and every evening when her royal mistress was going to bed she would amuse her, and show the fascinated King, who was always present, that she cared for no one but him, by making fun of her adorers, and repeating what they had said to her.¹ The poor Queen was charmed with her wit.

Another unsuspecting—though not so innocent—victim was La Vallière. The Marquise had gradually wormed herself into her confidence, entering with the utmost sympathy into her sorrow at the King's cooling affections, and acting the part of a thoroughly affectionate and judicious friend. She most probably pointed out very delicately La Vallière's want of vivacity as her only deficiency among many perfections, and as a danger where the

¹ Petitot, "De la Fare Mémoires," vol. lxxv. p. 165.

King was concerned ; and disinterestedly promised to help by her agreeable sallies to make his visits to his lady-love pass pleasantly to him. She was so anxious to do this, and was so much attached to La Vallière, that she spent nearly all her time in her apartments, and made a third in the interviews between her and the King. When La Vallière discovered the real state of the situation, it was too late for remedy ; and the unfortunate woman, whose love for Louis was the one passion of her life, was forced to remain at the Court for three years in the constant companionship of her triumphant rival, in order that the King's amours with a married woman should be to a certain extent veiled from publicity.

Louis was very brutal. One day—so the story runs—he threw a dog into La Vallière's arms when he passed through her room on his way to the Montespan apartments, saying, "That is good enough for you !" It was no wonder that, in later years, La Vallière consoled herself, when she was inclined to feel discontented at the hardships in her convent, by the thought that nothing could make her suffer as she had suffered in the world.

Occasionally, however, Louis had returns of tenderness, and, tears coming to him easily, he would weep when she entreated permission to leave the Court. It must be pleaded in his defence that to make assurance doubly sure, Madame



From a photo by Neurdin after the picture at Versailles

LOUISE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

de Montespan had added calumny to her other sins, and had persuaded the King that not he but Lauzun was father to the Comte de Vermandois, who was born to La Vallière on October 3, 1667.¹

Madame de Montespan did not leave a stone unturned to gain her ends; in fact, to compass these she went down to the dark places of the earth, where unspeakable wickedness was practised. La Vallière's life was in imminent danger from the gay, beautiful young woman who charmed the religious Queen by her punctual attendance at the Communion every eight days. The search for philtres to gain the King's love, and of magic powders which would destroy his affection for La Vallière, led to the purchase of decoctions which would remove the hated rival altogether out of the world; indeed, an illness in 1670, from which La Vallière nearly died, may with much probability be ascribed to the kindly offices of her dearest friend. For Madame de Montespan was one of La Voisin's clients; and her name figures in the famous trial of the empoisonneuses, which was hushed up as much as was practicable because so many well-known people were implicated in it. Later on, she was more successful in her designs, for, according to evidence given during La Voisin's trial, there is little doubt that the death in 1681 of Mademoiselle de Fontanges, who had been for

¹ "Lettres de la Princesse Palatine," vol. i. p. 306.

a time her successful rival, was caused by poison administered through her agency. La Voisin was an elegantly clad lady who received her aristocratic clients in a well-furnished room. So possibly Madame de Montespan did not know the gloomy garden of Villeneuve-sur-Gravois—the graveyard of many unknown infants—nor had she most probably penetrated into the house where the sorceresses boiled live toads, and made disgusting concoctions, in their exercise of the so-called art of magic, while under the cover of this they plied their real trade—that of removing inconvenient people out of the world.

It was a lucrative occupation, or no one would have undertaken it, for discovery meant, according to the methods then adopted, a death about as painful as the prisoner had accorded to her victims. Madame de Montespan was a bold woman, but, unlike the Comtesse de Soissons, she escaped the consequences of her imprudence. She was bold, too, in other ways, for she had added sacrilege to her crimes ; had visited the little chapel belonging to the old Château of Villebousin, had had a child killed and the Black Mass said over her,¹ and had formulated her wish for the King's love, and for his separation from La Vallière. It is little wonder that in her later days she was terrified at the idea of death ; and that

¹ Ravaisson, "Archives de la Bastille," vol. vi. p. 432.

she paid women to watch by her bed all night, so that if she woke she might find them talking, laughing, or eating, and might never be alone or have opportunity to brood over the past.¹

Meanwhile to the Court generally, who could not see the darker shades of the picture, she was a fascinating young woman who was in a fair way to obtain a position which many among them coveted. So honourable, at that time, was accounted the post of King's mistress, that her ambition was almost legitimate; and even the Grande Mademoiselle, who saw well what was in progress, and whose morality is a refreshing contrast to that of most of the fashionable women of the period, apparently perceived nothing to condemn seriously in Madame de Montespan's conduct.

We must remember, however, as a reason for this indulgence, that at this time Lauzun and Madame de Montespan were so intimately allied that any one frequenting the society of one would be sure to come in contact with the other, and that some of the malicious at the Court considered them in love with each other. This Madame de Caylus denies emphatically;² and as she was Madame de Maintenon's niece, and Madame de Maintenon became later the intimate friend of Madame de Montespan, and was, moreover, a lady whom it

¹ Chéruel, “Saint-Simon Mémoires,” vol. v. p. 262.

² “Souvenirs de Madame de Caylus,” p. 108.

would be difficult to deceive, her niece's contradiction is worthy of credence. Nevertheless, the fact that Mademoiselle, who was intensely jealous of Lauzun's supposed connection with La Vallière, never felt a like resentment in the case of Madame de Montespan, is an additional proof of that lady's tact and cleverness.

We have seen that in the salutary pause in his active life imposed on him by a six months' sojourn in the Bastille, Lauzun had had time—like the exiled Duchesse de Montpensier—for reflection, and had resolved on a new departure in conduct. He had realised that as advancement was only attainable through his royal master, it would be a terrible mistake to put himself forward in rivalry to the King as a lady-killer, and that it would be far wiser to assist him in his love-affairs than to thwart him. Therefore, as soon as he realised what was likely to be the upshot of the relations between Louis and Madame de Montespan, he set to work to become the lady's confidant, and to help on the affair with energy. We may hope that he was not aware that Madame de Montespan used his name to alienate the King from La Vallière ; but he did know that he was talked of throughout the Court as a probable husband for the King's discarded mistress.

This solution of the difficulty of disposing of her fallen rival may have been suggested to the

King by Madame de Montespan, when it at last seemed possible that she might obtain a separation from her husband and that La Vallière would be no longer necessary to her. It was not till 1671, however, that the exiled and ruined Marquis de Montespan consented to make his wife's position as King's mistress an assured one, by granting her the longed-for boon of freedom from the marital tie ; and it was only three years later that the penitent La Vallière entered a Carmelite convent, and became Sœur Louise de la Miséricorde.

In 1667 and 1668, Madame de Montespan was only beginning to feel her way to greatness, and there is no doubt that Lauzun was of much use to her. In February 1668, Molière, who held the post of playwright to the Court, produced a very amusing, though not very moral play called "L'Amphitryon," which was a glorified though unmistakable picture of the state of affairs between Louis XIV. as Jupiter, and Madame de Montespan ; the latter, as heroine, being treated with courtier-like tact. In this play the valet who helps Jupiter in his pursuit of the lady was, according to popular report, intended to represent Lauzun.

There is no doubt that Lauzun was Madame de Montespan's close ally, and that he considered her gratitude for his help would attach her to his interests for ever ; while she, intensely jealous and suspicious, looked forward to a time when she would

be strong enough to ruin him. Therefore the match between the two was not an equal one.

Meanwhile the Court watched with amusement ; and the Grande Mademoiselle, who saw very little of what went on around her, and prided herself—perhaps wisely—on not listening to Court gossip, dreamt of her hero, and was much taken up with her own concerns. She was soon to be brought into continual contact with Peguillin, for the King, after wandering with some of his army along the frontier of Flanders, decided at last on declaring war against the Low Countries ; and in June 1667 the Court left Compiègne, and prepared to follow the King's conquering army.

The pretext for the war was the death of Louis XIV.'s father-in-law, Philip IV. of Spain, Louis claiming that as the dowry promised to Marie Thérèse had never been paid by her father, her renunciation on her marriage of any succession to Spanish territory was not binding, and that Charles II., the present King, being son by the second marriage, the Queen of France was entitled, as offspring of Philip's first marriage, to the provinces of Flanders, Brabant, and Franche-Comté.

Louis had taken the command of thirty-five thousand men,¹ a body of eight thousand had been dispatched to Dunkirk, and four thousand to Luxemburg. Turenne was the real, the King

¹ Voltaire, "*Siècle de Louis XIV.*," *Œuvres*, vol. xiii. p. 290.

the ostensible commander of the army. Colbert had exerted all the resources of the State to provide funds, and Louvois, the new War Minister, had made tremendous preparations for the campaign.

From Mademoiselle's account, there is no doubt that Madame de Montespan had by this time ousted La Vallière from the King's affections, and that her exclamation when the poor Queen had wept herself ill because La Vallière had followed the Court: "Dieu me garde d'être maîtresse du roi!" was only part and parcel of her usual hypocrisy. At this juncture La Vallière was desperate. On the arrival of the Court at Guise, the Queen forbade any one to pass her, as she wished to be the first to greet the King; but when the procession, with the Queen at the head of it, drew near the place where the Sun-God was stationed, La Vallière could bear the delay no longer, but had her carriage trotted across the fields that she might arrive before her royal mistress, and see Louis alone.

Meanwhile, the wily Madame de Montespan kept near the Queen, sympathised with her tears, visited orphanages, and brought back vivacious accounts of their inmates, went for long walks with the Grande Mademoiselle, and attended Mass regularly.

The campaign was what is termed colloquially "a walk over" on the part of Louis. To quote from Voltaire: "He entered Charleroi as

though it had been Paris; Ath and Tournai were taken in two days; Furnes, Armentières, Courtrai did not hold out longer. He descended into the trenches before Douai, which surrendered the next day (August 27). Lille, the most flourishing and the only well-fortified town in this country, with a garrison, capitulated after a nine days' siege (August 31). The Spaniards had only eight thousand men to oppose to this victorious force; indeed the rear-guard of their little army had been cut to pieces by the Marquis, since Maréchal, de Créqui. The remainder hid itself under cover of Brussels and of Mons, leaving the King to conquer without fighting!"¹

However, the affair did not seem so simple to the ladies of the Court who accompanied the King into Flanders. Mademoiselle was of the number, and enjoyed herself immensely. Turenne, who was hated by the Ministers, was accused of unduly favouring his cousin Puyguilhem, and of giving him the coveted post of commander at the attack on the Château of Tournai, though this position should in fairness have been accorded to Humières.

The news of the surrender of Courtrai, which took place rather later, reached the King on his way to join the army, and caused general excitement and pleasure. Mademoiselle listened with delightful flutterings of the heart to the account of Monsieur de

¹ "Le Siècle de Louis XIV.," Œuvres, vol. xiii. p. 292.

Peguilin's prowess on this occasion.¹ He commanded a separate force of six or seven thousand men, detached by order of the King from the main body ; and the place was taken very quickly because he made a most vigorous attack on the counterscarp, and became master of the defences on his side of the attack, a quarter of an hour before the rest of the town surrendered.

It was no wonder that Mademoiselle was delighted. Did the man who was fighting so valiantly and fearlessly realise that his pluck and dash were in a fair way to win him a wife, as well as increased royal favour ? It was probable that he had appreciated the situation ; for those blue eyes which, half closed, were so deceptive in their apparently unobservant dullness, were in reality quick to discern what might be useful to their owner, while the clever brain was rapid in the work of registering, assimilating, and combining.

At the siege of Lille, Peguilin performed marvels.² Among other actions he took the "half moon," which obliged the enemy to sound a parley at his side of the attack. He then captured some hostages, whom he sent to the King by Lanny, who acted as his aide-de-camp. Louis was so delighted at his prowess—as was no doubt the charming Madame de Montespan—that Peguilin was given advance-

¹ Chéruei, "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 53.

² *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 60.

ment before the capitulation of the town was signed, and was put in command of a detachment of two thousand horse with orders to go to Tournai, to join there the Marquis de Créqui, and to march with him against some of the enemy's force, who appeared to be on their way to succour Lille. Peguillin had been wounded, but in the hurry there was no time to attend to his injuries, and he started at once. After his force had united with that of de Créqui, they came across M. de Bellefonds with a detachment of soldiers, and asked him to join them. He refused ; and the dare-devil Peguillin said gaily, "Let him go where he likes, and we will march on the enemy." This they did ; and the next day (June 31, 1667) a battle took place. The enemy were numerically strong, and for some time the result seemed doubtful. Peguillin fought like a little demon, being captured two or three times by the enemy and escaping, having his jerkin pierced in three places, and one of his boots cut off by a sabre-cut. At last he conceived the brilliant idea of dismounting his dragoons and sending them to charge the enemy's flank. This gave him the opportunity of making a frontal attack on the opposing force while in a shaken condition. The result was decisive ; the enemy was beaten, many prisoners were taken, and a considerable number killed.

Every one was talking about Peguillin ; and the

dispatches which the King sent to Arras, where the Queen and Court were located, contained long accounts of his prowess. "He has never been anywhere without being talked about!"¹ cries the Grande Mademoiselle enthusiastically. The campaign over, the Court returned to Paris. But in the beginning of 1668 the King, taking with him the young Duc d'Enghien, son of Condé, started suddenly for the conquest of Franche-Comté. This enterprise had its origin in Court intrigues caused by the jealousy that Condé and Louvois both felt for Turenne, and by Condé's anxiety to be Governor in Franche-Comté as well as Burgundy. Thirst for military glory drove Louis from the amusements of Saint-Germain; but he was all the time anxious to be back with his beloved Madame de Montespan. Fortunately, the campaign was over in three weeks, so that he could return to his pleasures; while, indignant at the small amount of resistance shown to the all-conquering French monarch, the Spanish Council wrote to the Governor of the conquered province that, "the King of France should have sent his lackeys to take possession of the country instead of going himself."²

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 6.

² Voltaire, "Siècle de Louis XIV." Œuvres, vol. xiii. p. 297.

CHAPTER IX

The Grande Mademoiselle becomes more and more interested in Lauzun—Lauzun tries for the post of Grand Master of the Artillery—Loses it through indiscretion—Asks for Madame de Montespan's help—She betrays him—His revenge—He is made Captain of the King's Guard.

THE Grande Mademoiselle has been unkindly treated by her contemporaries, who only saw the uncharming—even the comical—side of her personality ; but the reader of the history of the reign of Louis XIV. is bound to treat her with fairness, even with indulgence, in thankfulness for the relief her strictly moral life is to that of most of the Court circle of her time.

However, those brought into actual contact with her weaknesses found them irritating, while her virtues, being a tacit reproof to their sins, were only circumstances which added to their dislike for her. Possibly she was unamiable ; since the time of her babyhood she had been educated to think so much of her own importance that it was difficult for her to cultivate unselfishness, while in middle life she became jealous of those of whom she had thought lightly in her youth, but who later rose to positions far transcending hers. On the other hand, she was

never mean or cowardly, and the historian finds no shameful secrets in her life—only one gigantic blunder made by reason of her faith in the man she loved.

In 1669, when she was forty-two years of age, she was in love for the first time ; and though occasionally assailed by doubts and fears of a lover-like description, was supremely happy. She had not yet even begun to think seriously about the nature of the momentous step she contemplated.

This was indeed an extraordinary change in the Grande Mademoiselle, who always looked on matrimony from a strictly practical point of view. Truly the wicked little love-god works marvels !

One day at Versailles, in the presence of the King, the Countess of Soissons, who had lately returned from an exile imposed as a punishment for telling the Queen of the King's attachment to La Vallière, was singing topical couplets on Court notorieties. These were very fashionable at the time, and were known as “contre-vérités,” because their satire consisted in the description of people by their contraries.

The one devoted to Lauzun—as he was now designated—went as follows : “De la Cour. La vertu la plus pure : est en Peguilin.”

On hearing these words, the King, who had hitherto listened with amusement, and had even allowed ridicule of La Vallière to pass without

comment, interrupted the singer, and remarked severely, "If the intention be to annoy Peguillin, I consider it a wrong one. However, if people act as he does, they need not feel anxious about anything."¹

No one dared to speak further on the subject. But Mademoiselle listened with deep satisfaction. She had an almost superstitious respect and admiration for the King, and if anything could possibly raise her idol in her eyes, it would be the fact that her royal cousin worshipped at the same shrine—if the phrase may be used without undue hyperbole.

It was not surprising that Lauzun had powerful enemies, and the fact that Louvois, the great War Minister, feared and loathed him as he undoubtedly did, was a tribute to the power of the penniless Gascon, who, armed with apparently but slender qualifications, had yet forced himself into a position of first favourite with the King.

No wonder that from exile Bussy wrote bitterly : "As to what you tell me about Lauzun's good fortune, I can only say to you that man proposes and destiny disposes. Who, knowing our respective crimes, would have said that he would only be three months at the Bastille, and that I should suffer all that I have suffered? Fate makes the crimes of fortunate people pass as peccadilloes, and the peccadilloes of the unfortunate as crimes."²

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 68.

² Bussy-Rabutin, "Correspondance," vol. i. p. 236.

In the same year (1669) Lauzun put his royal master's devotion severely to the test.

The Duc de Mazarin, who had—as we have already seen—married one of Mazarin's nieces, and had been left the bulk of the Cardinal's enormous fortune, was seized with religious scruples about the possession of his many posts and appointments. His contemporaries looked upon him as a lunatic, and when we hear that he proposed to take out his daughters' front teeth in order to save them from any predisposition to vanity, it seems as though there may have been justifications for their view of the matter.

Nevertheless, in that corrupt age we cannot refrain from according our meed of respect to the man who had the courage to rebuke Louis XIV. for his love for La Vallière, even though the King's response to his impassioned diatribe gave infinite amusement to the Court. "Have you finished?" said Louis; "I always knew that you were injured there";¹ and putting his hand to his forehead he left the room.

According to Olivier d'Ormesson, those who did not laugh at the duke blamed him for his interference, as they considered that he did not possess sufficient character or authority to act as mentor. Be that as it may, with a scrupulousness rare in his or any time, he resolved to give up all his

¹ "Journal d'Olivier d'Ormesson," vol. ii. p. 275.

lucrative posts, and among them that of "Grand Maître de l'Artillerie."

Lauzun naturally heard of this resignation from the King before most people had wind of it, and employed all his eloquence to secure the appointment for himself.

Louvois was also cognisant of the matter, and begged the King as a special favour not to give the post to Lauzun, as he said that he could not agree with him, and that there would be constant friction in the War Department. Moved by his representations the King told Lauzun frankly that he would like to make him chief of the artillery, but dared not, fearing that he and Louvois would quarrel continually, but that, as compensation for the disappointment, he would raise him to the rank of duke. The spoilt favourite was, however, only more determined to obtain the coveted post when he discovered that Louvois was working against him, so he refused the dukedom, thinking that it would certainly come to him later on, and continued to press the King about the mastership of the artillery. In the end Louis, who found it difficult to deny any request made by his friend, promised the post to him if he would be absolutely silent about the matter for a few days, so that Louvois should not know what was in contemplation till everything was settled.

Lauzun of course promised ; but when the day

arrived on which he expected the matter to be declared, he was in a state of intense impatience ; and, while the Council of Finance—after which he expected that his promotion would be announced—was in progress, he placed himself in the antechamber, and waited in a fever of excitement for the King to emerge.

The antechamber was empty, except for Nyert, the first “valet-de-chambre,” who was surprised that Lauzun should leave the adjoining room where all the Court were assembled, and asked him why he was waiting.¹ Lauzun could contain himself no longer ; besides, he hoped to attach Nyert to himself, and did not know that the first valet was one of Louvois’ creatures, and repeated everything to him. He therefore told him of his good fortune.

Nyert affected to hear the news with the greatest pleasure ; then, remarking that there was something

¹ Chéruel, “Saint-Simon Mémoires,” vol. xix. p. 171, and “Écrits inédits,” vol. vii. p. 311. In both accounts Saint-Simon tells us that the scene between the King and Lauzun, in which the latter broke his sword and was in consequence imprisoned in the Bastille, took place after this. In this sequence of events he is evidently mistaken, and his mistake is not surprising, as he wrote long afterwards. If Lauzun’s imprisonment had taken place at this date, the Grande Mademoiselle would have mentioned the fact in her Mémoires, especially as she tells of his failure to obtain the post of “Grand Maître de l’Artillerie” (“Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 71). The Venetian Ambassador’s letter of July 31, 1665—quoted on page 137 and taken from vol. iii. p. 437 of “Archives de la Bastille”—proves conclusively that Lauzun’s impertinence to the King and imprisonment took place in 1665. He was certainly not imprisoned again in 1670.

he had forgotten and must at once do for the King, he rushed four stairs at a time to the bureau where Louvois worked all day, and told him that at the close of the Committee Lauzun would be declared Grand-Master of the Artillery, and that he was now waiting in the antechamber for his promotion to be proclaimed.

Louvois was horrified at the news ; for, besides his jealousy of Lauzun's position as favourite, he hated him as an ally of his rival, Colbert ; and feared that if once Lauzun were to become head of the artillery, he would interfere with the centralising scheme by which the War Minister intended to obtain the chief supremacy in the kingdom. By this policy—which ultimately proved disastrous to France—the generals became more and more like puppets, the strings which controlled their movements being held at Versailles, so that they could do nothing without first consulting the War Minister. Lauzun, however, would not, he knew, submit to his authority, and would upset all his arrangements.

No time must be lost if he wished to circumvent his enemy. He seized a sheet of paper, and, knowing the King's indignation when his secrets were betrayed, wrote hurriedly a couple of lines to the effect that he had heard of Lauzun's proposed promotion from some one who had been told the news by the fortunate man himself, and that he would like to see the King at once.

This paper he gave to Nyert, who took it at once to the Council Chamber. Louvois followed him almost immediately to the anteroom, where Nyert feigned innocent surprise at seeing the War Minister, and remarked that the Council was not yet over. "Never mind," replied Louvois, "I must go in ; I have something important to say to the King" ; and he entered the Council Chamber.

This was a most unusual occurrence, and the King, who had not looked at the paper given him by Nyert, was much surprised. He opened and read it in Louvois' presence, and flushed with anger when he heard of Lauzun's indiscretion. Louvois then drew him into an embrasure of one of the windows, and employed all the arguments he could think of to prevent Lauzun obtaining the post. He reminded the King of his haughtiness, his caprices, the changes he was certain to make in the management of the artillery, and represented to him the fact that the posts of Minister for War and of Head of the Artillery were closely connected, and that it would be impossible for the work of the War Department to go smoothly with the certainty that he and Lauzun would be at constant variance. His Majesty would, he remarked considerably, be continually worried by their quarrels, and by the necessity of settling their rival pretensions.

The King was naturally much annoyed that his secret should be revealed to the man from whom

above all others he wished to conceal it. His fear of Louvois' remonstrances had been the principal reason for his hesitation to grant Lauzun's request, and when he had carefully arranged everything so that Louvois should know nothing till the matter was irrevocable, it was intensely exasperating that the indiscretion of the person to be benefited should spoil everything. It was only right that the culprit should suffer. Therefore, he said gravely that the matter was not yet settled, dismissed Louvois, and sat down again to the Council.

When it was over Louis went to Mass, and passed Lauzun on his way, without speaking. Perplexed and troubled, Lauzun waited and hoped all day, but nothing happened; so at the "petit coucher" he spoke to the King about his promise. The King replied drily that it was impossible to fulfil it now, but that he would consider the matter later.

A few days afterwards, Louis told Lauzun that the necessary connection between the Secretary of State and the head of the artillery would cause quarrels between him and Louvois, that he would be forced to act as arbitrator between the two, and that he would hate this. He ought, he said, to have thought of this difficulty sooner, but as he had not done so, Lauzun would please him very much if he would absolve him from his promise about the artillery, and would ask for something else instead.

Pressed further, he remarked coldly that as Lauzun had not kept his promise of secrecy, the promise on the other side was no longer binding. However, in spite of the King's decided attitude, Lauzun would not yield ; to be head of the artillery was the post which he coveted above all others, and nothing else would satisfy him. He was even audacious enough to refuse the coveted office of Captain of the King's Guards.

The truth was that he did not give up hope of obtaining his wish ; and secure—he thought—in the friendship of Madame de Montespan, whom he had helped materially in her climb to the giddy eminence she now enjoyed, he applied to her, and begged her to use her good offices for him with the King.

She was most sympathetic and charming. She promised to do her best, and thus kept him amused during several days ; but as nothing came of her assurances, he grew suspicious, and determined that he would test her sincerity for himself.

One afternoon, when she was about to see the King, and had renewed her promises to intercede for him, Lauzun determined to be present at the interview, and took the extraordinary step of bribing the chambermaid to hide him under the bed in the room in which it was to take place. It was a dangerous position ; “a cough, the slightest movement, any chance, might have led to his discovery,

and then what would have become of him? The story makes one gasp and shudder at the same time," says Saint-Simon.¹

The beginning of the conversation must have been interesting, if painful, to the unseen listener, for Madame de Montespan kept her promise, and led the conversation to the question of the artillery. The King expatiated on the subject, and Lauzun must have cursed himself, as well as Nyert and Louvois, as he heard for the first time how he had been betrayed, and learnt that, partly through disgust at his indiscretion, and partly through fear of quarrels between him and Louvois, the King had resolved never to grant his most cherished wish.

Worse was to follow, for Madame de Montespan next took up the tale, and the unfortunate man must have nearly choked with rage, for in her charming, amusing way, with the peculiar and piquant turn of wit peculiar to the Montemarts, she made the King laugh by telling him how she had duped Lauzun by promising to intercede for him, while all the time she agreed with Louvois in his estimate of his rival. Then she began to ridicule her absent friend, to laugh at his fits of bad temper, at the airs he gave himself, and to tell the King that if he were imprudent enough to give him the command he craved, he would

¹ Chéruel, "*Mémoires de Saint-Simon*," vol. xix, p. 172.

have more trouble with the artillery than with all the rest of the army put together.

Saint-Simon tells us that "after the King and Madame de Montespan had left the room, the chambermaid dragged Lauzun from under the bed."¹ The unfortunate man had no doubt nearly lost the use of his limbs through rage ; indeed, considering his irascible temperament, it would not have been astonishing had he been seized with apoplexy.

However, he had sufficient self-control to return to his rooms and to adjust his costume, which had been somewhat disarranged by his sojourn in a cramped space, and then, wild with rage, he remained glued to the Montespan's door till she came out of her room in the evening, beautifully adorned for a dance. He then stepped forward, and offering his hand to lead her to the ball-room, he asked gently, and in a respectful voice, whether he might flatter himself that she had remembered him in her conversation with the King. She replied that she had, and related an imaginary account of the potent arguments she had used on his behalf, complaining at the same time of the small success of her efforts.

Lauzun let her say what she liked, only interrupting her occasionally with a question designed to show how thoroughly he believed her story. Then, walking very slowly, he repeated to her in a whisper every word that he had overheard from

¹ Chéruel, "*Mémoires*," vol. xix. p. 173.

her lips. Afterwards, he put his mouth to her ear, and speaking always gently and in a low voice, though his eyes were like lighted coals,¹ he called her liar, and rascal, and all the vile names he could think of, finishing by shaking his fist at her and threatening to tear her eyes out.

Madame de Montespan was so terribly agitated that she had no strength to answer him,² and barely enough to make her way to the ball-room, where Lauzun conducted her to the Queen in a respectful manner, while lavishing in an undertone violent abuse upon her, interspersed with threats of personal violence. She could hardly conceal the trembling of her legs, indeed of her whole body ; and when her conductor left her unsupported, she fainted away. The whole Court were assembled in the hall, and the King, alarmed at her condition, went at once to her assistance.

It was long before she recovered consciousness ; but in the evening she was able to tell the King what had taken place, and said that it was no doubt the devil who had informed Puyguilhem so quickly and exactly what had been said about him. The King was much irritated at the abuse which had been heaped on Madame de Montespan, and very much puzzled at Puyguilhem's mysteriously exact information.

¹ Saint-Simon, note to "Dangeau Journal," vol. v. p. 207.

² Saint Simon, "Mémoires," vol. xix. p. 173.

However, being on the whole a just man, and really feeling affection for Lauzun, he realised that hard measure had been dealt to him ; and it was probably on this occasion that, after lecturing him on his rudeness, the King insisted that he should be reconciled with Madame de Montespan, and forced the two belligerents to embrace in the royal presence.¹

Possibly each party realised that the other was too strong to be a safe enemy, for shortly afterwards we find them apparently closely allied, Madame de Montespan furthering, or pretending to further, Lauzun's affair with the Grande Mademoiselle, and he on his part performing his share of the contract loyally, and working hard to bring about the marriage she earnestly desired for her niece.

It would have been safer for him had she been his avowed enemy, and the fact that, after being grossly deceived, the usually clear-sighted Lauzun trusted her again, is an extraordinary proof of her power of fascination ; or perhaps of the influence she exerted over Louis, which made it impossible to obtain anything from the King without first securing her good offices.

On this occasion Louis stood firm in his refusal to grant Lauzun the post of Head of the Artillery, which was given to the Comte de Lude, a sporting gentleman who was not likely to interfere with the prerogatives of Louvois, while Lauzun was, in

¹ " *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*," vol. ii. p. 63.

compensation for his disappointment, persuaded to take the place vacated by de Lude, that of "Capitaine des Gardes du Corps." When he took it half grudgingly, he little thought that it would in the future acquire such enormous importance in his eyes, that the loss of it would nearly break his heart.

There were four captains of the Bodyguard, and the post was much coveted, as during his three months in office each year, the holder was constantly in the presence of the King, and enjoyed the right of the precious "grandes entrées," or "entrées des premiers gentilhommes de la chambre," a privilege to which only a few very important offices entitled the holder, and which was only otherwise possessed by the Royal Family, Louis' natural children, and by certain great Court officials.

As described by Saint-Simon,¹ there were six sorts of entrées, two being very distinguished, three very pleasant, and the last being conferred by the first gentleman of the chamber for the year. The "grandes entrées" stood at the head of this list, as those who enjoyed them, besides possessing the special privileges conferred by the other entrées, were admitted to the King's "petit lever" and "coucher"; so that they saw him in bed, and were, besides, entitled to go to him in his private room at all times except when he was working with a Minister.

† Chéruel, "Mémoires," vol. xix, p. 98,

Olivier d'Ormesson describes the “Bed of Justice” or Council held on August 13, 1669, and tells us that Monsieur de Peguillin made his first public appearance as “Capitaine des Gardes,” sitting, with Charost and Rochefort, his colleagues, at one side of the throne, below Monsieur le Duc de Bouillon, who took his place as Grand Chamberlain at the King's feet. The King was in black, and d'Ormesson wore his red robe, and sat on the first bench reserved for members of the Council.¹

According to the Grande Mademoiselle—whose testimony, however, Monsieur Chéruel unkindly says is naturally “suspect”—Lauzun took up his charge in July 1669, “with the best grace in the world ; being careful without perturbation, and absolutely exact. I think that his pains were well rewarded, for they seemed to please the King.”²

When the Princess complimented him on the matter, he made one of the few pretty speeches recorded in his intercourse with her, and remarked that “since she had begun to talk to him, good fortune seemed to have come to him.”

After this, Mademoiselle very naturally proceeded to talk to him more frequently than ever, and decided that he was very agreeable, and had a most original way of expressing himself.

He was extremely busy during his first quarter

¹ “Mémoires d'Olivier d'Ormesson,” vol. ii. p. 569.

² “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 73.

as Captain of the Guards, for a brilliant fête was held at Versailles to celebrate the visit to France of Mademoiselle's brother-in-law, the Duke of Tuscany; and shortly afterwards the Grande Mademoiselle gave a grand entertainment for the betrothal of Mademoiselle de Créqui, who was one of her ladies, to the Comte de Jarnac. Every one of importance was there, and after the first ceremony "Tartuffe" was performed, the couple not being finally married till after midnight, which was the usual time for weddings at that period. When the festivities were over, Mademoiselle retired to Eu, where she remained till December. When she said good-bye to Lauzun, he entreated her to entrust him with any commissions she might have for the Court, as "he begged me to believe that though I had only known him for a short time, he would yield to none among my oldest servants in affection for me; that he believed I had a certain amount of confidence in him, and that this had touched him deeply."¹

On December 6 (1669), Mademoiselle returned to Saint-Germain, and tells us that people were much astonished at the length of her stay there. She passed a very pleasant winter,—though occasionally she was obliged, to her disgust, to go to Paris,—for Lauzun was often in the Queen's apartments, and she enjoyed much conversation with him.

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 80.

She became friends now for the first time with Henriette Duchesse d'Orléans, with whom Lauzun was on most intimate terms, though Mademoiselle hastens to assure her readers, with much emphasis, that there had never been any question of love between the two.

As a result of these meetings, the Princess began to review the situation seriously, and decided that she was tired of a single life, and that she wished to marry. "I reasoned with myself," she says, "(for I spoke about it to no one else), and I said, 'This is not a vague idea; there must be some object to cause it'; and I could not discover who it was. I hunted, I thought, and I could find no one. At last, after having worried myself for several days, I perceived that it was Monsieur de Lauzun whom I loved, who had glided into my heart; I looked upon him as the most accomplished man in the world, and the most agreeable, and I considered that the one thing wanting to my happiness was a husband like him whom I should love very much, and who would love me; that no one had ever shown me affection; and that for once in my life I wanted to taste the sweetness of being loved by some one who was worthy of being loved."¹

Mademoiselle went further, for she believed, poor thing, that Lauzun loved her, and, like herself, found the days dull on which they did not see each other;

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 92.

and she fancied that though he did not dare to reveal his feelings, he showed this by the care he took to go to see the Queen, a duty which often brought him into contact with the Grande Mademoiselle, who for her part was at this time most assiduous in her attentions to her royal mistress.

She quoted to herself a passage out of one of Corneille's comedies, which begins with these words, spoken by the hero :

Quand les ordres du ciel nous ont faits l'un pour l'autre,
Lise, c'est un accord bientôt fait que le nôtre.
Sa main entre les cœurs, par un secret pouvoir,
Sème l'intelligence avant que de se voir ;
Il prépare si bien l'amant et la maîtresse
Que leur âme au seul nom s'émeut et s'intéresse.
On s'estime, on se cherche, on s'aime en un moment,
Tout ce qu'on s'entredit persuade aisément.
Et, sans s'inquiéter de mille peurs frivoles,
La foi semble courir au-devant des paroles.¹

These words were—it seemed to Mademoiselle in her present mood—deeply religious ; they were even suitable for meditation ; indeed she often thought over them in church. She concludes this department of her subject with pious though perhaps slightly pharisaical thanks to the Almighty : “I ought to offer many thanks to God for the disposition of my heart, and for the way in which he has made it.”

Afterwards, she descended to more mundane considerations, and thought over the fact that her lover would owe much to her, and that it would be

¹ Suite du “Menteur,” Act IV., Scene I.

decidedly pleasanter to remain in her own country under so great a king as Louis XIV., than to become queen in a foreign land. There was also a certain lurking satisfaction in the idea that the people who hoped to inherit her fortune would be disappointed. At times she endeavoured to be impartial, and to estimate at their true value the disadvantages of her project ; indeed, once or twice she even decided that she did not care in the least for Lauzun, but this notion never survived one of their frequent meetings.

At last she took her final resolution—took it at the Church of the Récollets, where the Queen went every day, to attend a Neuvaïne which was being held for the canonisation of Saint-Pierre d'Alcantara. Never had the Grande Mademoiselle been conscious of feeling so much devotion—she was quite absorbed ; and she thought that “ God inspired her with what he wished her to do.”

Meanwhile, Lauzun's thoughts had most probably not yet soared to the dazzling height of marriage, but he realised the state of Mademoiselle's feelings, and was fully aware of the advantages to be derived from the love of a rich princess. He therefore began to put into practice with infinite skill the precepts which he impressed years afterwards on his grandnephew Rion, with whom the infamous Duchesse de Berry was in love. Lauzun then cited to him the example of his own behaviour towards

Mademoiselle, and said that the Bourbons were all alike, and that the only way to manage them was by rough treatment and coercion.¹

This was to a certain extent true, but Lauzun, in spite of his acuteness, never learnt to observe the danger signals, and to realise that there was a point at which neither the Grande Mademoiselle nor her cousin Louis XIV. would forgive an injury.

¹ Saint-Simon, "Mémoires," vol. xvi. p. 239.

CHAPTER X

Lauzun tries to obtain possession of Lorraine—His love-affair with Mademoiselle—Lauzun conveys the Duc du Maine to Madame Scarron—Madame de Montespan writes to him—Project of expedition through Flanders—Behind it design to conquer Holland—Mademoiselle's increasing love for Lauzun—Question of her marriage with the Duc de Longueville—Start of expedition through Flanders.

ABOUT this time, a rumour was circulated in Court circles to the effect that the King intended to return Lorraine to its rightful owners, and on this subject Bussy-Rabutin tells us¹ that though Lauzun was apparently so absolutely unconscious of Mademoiselle's feelings for him that he compelled her to make all the advances, and often drew back in a most ungallant fashion when she *had* made them, he was in reality preparing the way in secret for a marriage which would satisfy his most dazzling aspirations.

He was extremely cautious, for he was much more alive than the Grande Mademoiselle to the dangers of the undertaking, which was indeed most perilous for a penniless Gascon absolutely dependent on the favour of a despotic monarch, who could

¹ "Histoire amoureuse des Gaules," vol. ii. p. 64.

wield at will the rod of deprivation of office, exile, or even perpetual imprisonment. He was therefore determined that, while exerting all the arts of which he was master to draw on the Grande Mademoiselle, he would feign unconsciousness of her love for him, and reluctance, even horror, when he at last became aware of it.

However, the report of the proposed cession of Lorraine reached his quick ears sooner than it was generally propagated, and he considered that the possession of the province would make the disparity between his position and that of the Duchesse de Montpensier less enormous. He therefore wrote to the Duke of Lorraine to offer him five hundred thousand livres, a sum equivalent to about a hundred thousand pounds of our money, for the possible reversion in perpetuity of Lorraine.

The Duke, who was always in want of money, and who did not see much likelihood of ever returning to his patrimony, seemed inclined to assent to this proposition, so Lauzun approached the King on the subject, representing that it would be most advantageous to the royal dignity that the Duke of Lorraine should give up his pretensions for ever, and that the speaker, who was Louis' most humble and devoted servant, should hold the province as faithful vassal to the King of France. According to Bussy, the King assented to this proposition; but as we hear nothing more of the matter, the

negotiations cannot have been finally arranged at the time of Lauzun's disgrace.

Bussy's story is not dated, so we do not know when the notion of becoming Duke of Lorraine entered Lauzun's head, and it does not seem certain that it had any reference to his position with Mademoiselle de Montpensier, though his contemporaries would be sure to ascribe his ambition to that cause. Any attentive reader of the *Memoirs of the Grande Mademoiselle* cannot, I think, escape the feeling that though Lauzun used his utmost art as professional lady-killer to subjugate the Princess, he was for a long time extremely doubtful about the possibility of the King allowing any marriage between them, and was in a state of nervous terror at Mademoiselle's impetuous determination about the matter. Who shall attempt, however, to fathom or to disentangle the thousand varying thoughts and shades of thought, which must have passed through so complex a mind as Lauzun's, at this crisis in his life?

Mademoiselle's feelings were more simple. The day after she had, in the Church of the Récollets, taken the great resolution which was to lead to such disastrous results, the rumour of the King's abandonment of Lorraine came to her ears—a fact which proves that it was much discussed; and attached to this news was a rider to the effect that a marriage was to be arranged between her and Prince Charles of

Lorraine. Mademoiselle was very gay that day, and by some strange coincidence Lauzun was gay also. Here was the opportunity for which she longed ; she would speak to Lauzun, ask his advice about her marriage, perhaps delight and amaze him by a delicate hint as to her feelings for him ; at any rate find out whether he really cared for her.

She had some difficulty in finding the important little gentleman, but at last discovered him talking to the Comtesse de Guiche, who remonstrated when the Princess wanted to take him away from her, saying : "You can have him whenever you like, so I beg you to let me keep him now that I have got him."¹ So popular and sought after was Lauzun. He looked like an emperor, Mademoiselle thought, as she retired into a window—her heart beating—and waited ; and Lauzun was so much distracted by her presence, that he kept glancing in her direction all the time he was talking to Madame de Guiche. The interrupted conversation was, however, soon over, and Mademoiselle was free to exercise her fine diplomacy.

She began by informing Lauzun that he had shown her so much friendship that she had absolute confidence in him, and was determined to do nothing without his advice. Lauzun replied that he was much honoured by her words and very grateful for them, and that he wished she could look into his

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 96.

heart, for she would see that she was not deceived in the good opinion she had formed of him. They then exchanged "the most tender, pretty speeches in the world."¹

When this had gone on for some time, Mademoiselle proceeded to business, and asked whether Lauzun had heard the rumour that the King wished her to espouse the Duke of Lorraine. He said that he had been told of this, and that he was sure that the King would never wish to marry her to any one against her will. Mademoiselle then showed her hand—or at any rate thought she did so—for the first time. She remarked that many marriages had been talked of for her, and that she had listened to all the negotiations, but that she would have been in despair had any of them taken place. She loved her own country, and was so great a lady there that her ambition was satisfied, so that she had determined to seek for happiness rather than grandeur, and happiness would be impossible with any man unknown to her.

Lauzun answered, "Your sentiments are very reasonable, and every one must approve of them; but you are so fortunate as you are, that you do not surely think of marrying."

At this point the lady did not keep the conversation up to the properly romantic level, for she replied that she was very happy, but that she felt

¹ Chéruel, "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 96.

furious whenever she thought of the people who were waiting anxiously to inherit her possessions. Lauzun responded with his usual astuteness, and with a touch of real feeling: "Ah, I should be in despair about that; nothing would make me wish so much to be married!" At this point the Queen's entrance interrupted the *tête-à-tête*, and Lauzun finished with the remark that he hoped to profit by the honour of receiving her confidences, but that the conversation must be continued later, as much might be said on so important a subject.

Mademoiselle was very much pleased with herself, for she felt that Lauzun could no longer make any mistake about her feelings, and that at their next meeting she would learn his.

To continue in her own words, which are so graphic that Saint-Simon, who knew Lauzun well as an old man, says that any one reading them can imagine that he hears him speaking: ¹

"The next day, after the Queen had dined, he came to me and said: 'A book might be composed of all that has passed through my head since I had the honour of seeing you. I have made many castles in the air.' I said to him: 'And I too; but the things we have thought about may come true.' He said to me: 'Oh! I do not believe that.' 'But let us talk seriously,' I said to him, 'for all this is very important to me.' He began to laugh, and said:

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 316.

‘I should be very proud if I were your chief counsellor ; I should think very highly of myself’—‘And still more highly,’ I said to him, ‘as your advice would be followed, and not rejected ; for I shall not speak to anybody about all this. I am suspicious of every one, and am sure that you are the only person who will advise me rightly, and only in my own interests. Let us come to the facts.’—‘You maintain,’ he said, ‘that what has made you think of marriage is the trouble it gives you to hear the people cry : “So-and-so will have one property ; so-and-so another.” In my opinion that is very reasonable ; for one must live as long as one can, and not love those who wish for one’s death. But that you should have thought, “I shall marry because I have found some one who pleases me,” is inconceivable, there being no one in the world who can possibly be worthy of you. So I find you in a quandary, and pity the state in which I see you, and think it fortunate that you have found some one to whom you can occasionally unburden yourself ; for I realise that for a long time you have hunted for an individual worthy of the honour of your confidence, without being able to find any one. I consider myself the most fortunate of all men because of this choice, and I venture to say that it will be satisfactory for you, and that I shall make your affairs my one pleasure and joy, second only to the service of the King ; this will be my

intention. You must leave the state of life in which you suffer anxiety. You have nothing to wish for as to grandeur, property, establishments : fortune smiles upon you in those directions. You are esteemed, you are honoured for your virtue, your merit, as much as for your rank ; it is delightful to owe so much to one's personality. The King treats you extremely well ; he is fond of you. I can see that it pleases him to be with you. What can you wish for further ? If you had become a queen or an empress, you would have been very much bored ; those ranks are little raised above your own, and are attended with more trouble and less pleasure. Remain here, then, all your life, and enjoy the pleasures and advantages you possess. If you wish to marry, you have enough to make a man equal in grandeur and power to a king. He would realise that this was your doing, and would be grateful to you ; he would depend on the King, who is fond of you, and he would receive his grandeur, like you, from him ; and, because of your friendship for the King, this would add to your own grandeur, by connecting you still more closely with him to whom you are already so greatly attached. It is impossible to say what the man should be like who is the recipient of this honour ; but pleasing you and being chosen by you, he would certainly be an admirable person. He should be perfect ; but where is he ? All this is charming ; but I am afraid, as I have already said,

that it is only a castle in the air, 'because of the impossibility of finding any one to please you.' I began to laugh. I think that the joy with which I listened to him was a great joy to him. I said to him, 'All this is possible, and I will follow your advice.'

"This conversation lasted for a good two hours, and if the Queen had not come out of her oratory, I think it would have lasted much longer. I was very happy; I think he was also. We talked whenever we met—which was nearly every day; but he hardly ever came to me. It was I who went to him. Several days later I said to him: 'Well?' He answered me: 'I have thought of a hundred difficulties.' Our conversation on this occasion seemed completely to put an end to the matter: he only talked that day to me of disadvantages and difficulties. I was annoyed; but otherwise it had no effect upon me. I saw quite well that he did not believe what he said to me, and that it was said only to see what I would answer.

"The conversations we had after that were at rather long intervals. We only talked to each other about every week or fortnight, but later more often. I said to him: 'I have thought well over what you have said to me; but I find remedies for everything'; and I told him what these were. We began the subject again, and he said to me:

‘If I do not always understand your meaning and oppose your views, do not be annoyed. It is because I am speaking sincerely to you, and do not wish to flatter you about a matter which involves your safety and the comfort of your life. I shall say many things to you which are not polite and which will perhaps displease you : and I shall do this because I wish you to take a line for yourself ; whatever the rank may be, nothing in the world being more ridiculous than to see an unmarried woman forty years of age in full toilette in the midst of worldly amusements, like an empty-headed girl of fifteen. When a woman is that age she should become a nun or devout person, should dress modestly, and go nowhere. Because of your high rank, you might once, to fulfil your Court duties, go to the Opera ; but you should not stay all the time, should allow yourself to be besought before consenting to appear, should not seem happy there nor as though you were enjoying yourself, should praise nothing, but appear perfectly indifferent ; should go to vespers, to hear sermons, to benediction, to gatherings of poor people, to hospitals ; and should only at functions such as these perform the duties towards the Queen to which your rank obliges you. Or else you should marry ; for once married, a woman goes to everything at any age. She dresses like other people to please her husband ; she goes to amusements

because he wishes her to behave like other people. But this husband appears to me to be a very difficult person to find ; and perhaps even if you had found one who took your fancy, he might have faults which would make you unhappy ! So one does not know what to say about the matter.'

"We remained at this point ; for some one always interrupted us, or else the Queen came out. He never visited me in my room ; and I did not dare to ask him to come, being sure that he knew what it was best to do. I was not at all puzzled about the choice of suitors ; I knew that he was right in saying that I must take one of the three,¹ and it seemed to me that, knowing my intentions, he could not actually say to me 'take me,' and that it was for me to understand him, as I did perfectly, and was much gratified. I should have liked him to talk to me more plainly, being in a hurry to finish the affair ; but I found out later how considerate he was about my interests, and how grateful I ought to be for the moderation which no one but he would have shown, when a splendid fortune was in question, which people do not generally risk by over-long hesitation." ²

These long conversations, in which Lauzun certainly exhibited admirable skill, did not pass unnoticed at the Court ; and we are told that a

¹ Prince Charles of Lorraine, the Duc de Longueville, and Lauzun.

² Chéruel, "*Montpensier Mémoires*," vol. iv. p. 99.

number of Lauzun's intimates, the Ducs de Créquy, de Montausier, d'Albret, and de Richelieu, and the Comtes de Rochefort and de Guity, were gossiping one day, perhaps with half malicious intent, about one of the excitements of the day—the chances of Mademoiselle's marriage with the Duc de Longueville—when one of them turned to Lauzun and asked him laughingly why *he* did not enter the lists as a competitor for the hand of the heiress.

Lauzun started back in apparent astonishment and horror. “What! I?” he cried, “I! What do you say? I think of Mademoiselle! Ah, I know that Princess too well to contemplate a design which it terrifies me even to hear of, and the mere idea of which would make me a criminal. I do not even dare to imagine it!”¹

According to the writer of “*Le Perroquet, ou les Amours de Mademoiselle*,” Lauzun's friends continued to press the matter, urging upon his attention the fact that Mademoiselle de Montpensier evidently preferred his conversation to that of other people, and reminding him that he was so great a favourite with the King that he might aspire to anything. Lauzun still defended himself with the utmost warmth, bringing forward the strongest reasons to prove the utter impossibility

¹ “*Le Perroquet, ou les Amours de Mademoiselle*”—“*Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*,” vol. ii. p. 89.

of the marriage proposed to him ; but on his return home he continued to think about the matter, "and, having infinite wit, cleverness, and ambition, the idea of the difficulty of the undertaking rather incited than alarmed him, for he knew that the most difficult enterprises are always the most glorious."

The temerity of raising his eyes to a Princess who was the greatest heiress in Europe was no doubt enormous ; but, on the other hand, he could handle levers which were strong enough to put powerful machinery into motion. He knew of those secret love-affairs of the King and Madame de Montespan, which hid themselves behind the convenient personality of La Vallière, and on March 31, 1670, was entrusted with a delicate mission. A son (the Duc du Maine) was born to Madame de Montespan and to Louis XIV., and Lauzun was deputed to convey him to Madame Scarron, later on famous as Madame de Maintenon, who already had charge of the baby who was born in 1669 and died three years later.

The birth, which took place at midnight, was to be kept as far as possible secret, and so much hurry was necessary in getting rid of the child that there was no time to put him properly into his swaddling-clothes. They were twisted round him, Lauzun hid him under his cloak, and, in terror lest he should cry, ran with him to the gate

of the little park of Saint-Germain, where a carriage was waiting. Into this he hurried with his precious charge, and delivered him safely into the hands of Madame Scarron. Such services were worthy of gratitude, and as Lauzun was also working hard to gratify Madame de Montespan's family ambition by helping to bring about her niece's marriage, it must have seemed to him that he had sufficient hold on her to force her—unreliable though she was—to work for him.

Many of the letters of the time are provoking in their vagueness, the writers evidently wording them so that, if opened, their meaning should not be understood. The following epistle, however, written by Madame de Montespan to Lauzun and published by M. Clément,¹ shows that the two were outwardly on friendly terms, and that Madame de Montespan was ostensibly, at any rate, working for his interests. The letter is only dated the 30th of December, but was most probably written in 1669, after the reconciliation between the two effected by the King, and about three months earlier than the long conversation between Mademoiselle and Lauzun just recorded.

The letter, M. Clément says, is directed at the back, "Pour Monsieur de Losun," the two seals are still intact, and it is tied with rose-coloured

¹ "Madame de Montespan et Louis XIV.," p. 217. The autograph of this letter is in the possession of M. Boutron.

silk. There is no signature, and the spelling is extraordinary, as is always the case in Madame de Montespan's letters. Translated it runs thus : " It is so long since I have heard anything of you that I feel obliged to ask for news as to the state of your mind, for as to your business, I can instruct you about that. M. Colbert promises wonders with the papers which have been given him, and I think I heard him say that it is a piece of justice which would be due to any one. As to the other matter, I can tell you nothing for certain, but I have a ray of hope.

"I hope that a certain person will not come to Versailles, for I have already seen provoking retractations on similar occasions, and the only thing you may believe is that nothing is forgotten which might be serviceable to you, and that I do much more to serve you than I should do for myself."

Was the matter about which Madame de Montespan had a ray of hope the question of the dukedom of Lorraine? If so, we may suppose that the person who will not, she hopes, visit Versailles is Louvois, who would not certainly approve of so great a rise for his enemy.

Meanwhile, Louis' war with Spain being successfully over, he resolved to make a grand military expedition into Flanders to visit his new conquests, and to impress the inhabitants with the idea of his power and splendour. Thirty thousand men

were to accompany him, and his arrival at each town on his way was to be celebrated by a magnificent fête. Behind the reason of asserting his grandeur, however, was something more serious ; for the King, intoxicated by his triumphs, now contemplated the annexation of Holland. For this it was necessary to detach her from her ally England, and Henriette d'Orléans, who was to conduct the negotiations for this purpose, was to leave the expedition and to cross the Channel, as if to pay a merely friendly visit to her brother Charles II.

The serious side of the matter was, however, confided only to a few, and the Grande Mademoiselle knew only of the ostensible pretext for the journey. She was a good traveller, and did not mind the hardships of forming one of a perambulating Court which carried its furniture with it—or left it behind, as the case might be ; but she, as well as the Queen, suffered from an unreasoning dread of water, and neither of the two could help screaming whenever they had to cross a bridge, although they knew that this annoyed the King extremely.

On this occasion, however, she looked forward with the greatest pleasure to the expedition, which seemed specially planned for her benefit, as Lauzun was to be in command of it, so that there would be opportunity for frequent meetings. She generally spent a fortnight or three weeks at Eu at this time of the year, but on this occasion she put off

her departure from Versailles so long that the people of her household were quite surprised. At last, just before Easter, she managed to tear herself from Versailles, and went to Paris, having, before she left, the satisfaction of meeting Lauzun at evening Mass and of talking with him on the subject of religion, on which he expressed himself with the utmost eloquence. "Confess that you will be horribly bored in Paris,"¹ were his mischievous words as they said good-bye. And occasionally the innocent Mademoiselle still fancied that he was ignorant of her love for him!

She was indeed horribly bored, though she only stayed in Paris three days, and was terribly afraid that people would guess the reason of the shortness of her visit. Lauzun pretended, on her return, to explain to her the cause of her ennui. "Formerly you were not bored there," he said. "How is it? Let us try to find out the reason. Then you had nothing in your head to worry you, and now you have something which you only tell to me, so that you are dull if you do not see me. That would be flattering to me if any one knew of it without understanding the cause, but any one acquainted with that would realise that *I* do not count for anything in the matter."

The marriage of the Grande Mademoiselle to M. de Longueville, who was twenty-three years

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 103.

younger than herself—was much under discussion at this time; and the dowager Madame de Longueville was most anxious for it. Mademoiselle pretended to favour the idea, as she considered it helpful to her plans that it should be thought not only possible but probable that she should choose her husband from among the French nobility. When she went again to Paris for a day or two before her start, she found the whole of the rue Saint-Honoré filled with Lauzun's costly and magnificent carriages; and she thought, with happy faith in the future, that next year they would be even more beautiful. He smiled when he heard how she admired them, and joy filled her heart.

On April 28, 1670, the huge expedition left Paris. Lauzun must have felt that his task was no sinecure as he looked at the heavy, lumbering carriages, and the hundreds of carts laden with provisions and furniture. Among them was a bed for the King as large as a small room, and one for Mademoiselle adorned with so high a canopy, that a hole had generally to be made to let it through the ceiling of the room she occupied on the journey. However, this was the only way any one thought of travelling at that period, when even royal visitors brought their beds with them.

The first night was spent at Senlis, the next at Compiègne, where the Grande Mademoiselle managed to talk to Lauzun, though the Comte de

Guitry was evidently inquisitive, and inconsiderately insisted on making a third in the interview, no doubt with the intention of picking up scraps of information for the delectation of his friends. He must have been amused, and considered that, in spite of his pretences, Lauzun was following the advice offered him when, in reply to the Grande Mademoiselle's anxious question whether, when M. de Lauzun were once at the head of his army, she would be able to see him any more—Lauzun answered that he should certainly manage to see her as often as was practicable.

The next day, before they left Compiègne, she managed to have a *tête-à-tête* with him, and asked him pathetically whether her perplexities about marriage were not to be settled till the end of the journey, and whether he intended to leave her during all that time in the embarrassment for which he had said he felt so much pity. "We must only think now about the expedition," he answered ; and this response seems, under the circumstances, excusable, though it was certainly unloverlike. However, Mademoiselle was—as we have already seen—satisfied with very little ; and was, at the age of forty-three, absolutely without experience in the art of making love, though extremely well practised in the science of drawing up an alliance for marriage.

CHAPTER XI

The expedition through Flanders—Uncomfortable night owing to floods—Continued love-making—Death of Henriette of Orleans—The King proposes that Mademoiselle shall marry Monsieur—Her trouble at the proposal—Lauzun is apparently resigned.

MEANWHILE, whatever were Lauzun's hopes or fears, he was certainly determined to show himself to the best advantage to his lady-love, and the expedition seemed specially adapted for this purpose.

A general at the head of an army, even if it be only an army at play, is always a picturesque personage ; and Mademoiselle remembered till long afterwards every detail about Lauzun's appearance, and his most trivial words, during this happy time. At Compiègne she longed to walk with the King and with him in the garden, but she knew that the Queen would not approve of this ; so, in spite of Louis' invitation to her, she did not dare to come out, but contented herself with speaking to them each time they came close to the window. How dignified the little general must have felt as he walked among the gay throng, while the cousin of the greatest Prince in the world gazed adoringly at him from the window ! He performed

his part with more grace than he often showed, and she noticed with a thrill of pleasure that he looked oftener towards the window than at the people with whom he was talking.

Later in the day, he came into the Queen's apartment, saying that he was starting very early in the morning to assemble the troops; and next day, May 1, 1670, when the royal carriages had nearly reached Saint-Quentin, he appeared at the head of a crowd of officers, and they rode on each side of the royal carriages as escort. Lauzun was a very fine rider and devoted to horses, so he looked his best in his uniform, which he had put on with great care. Mademoiselle was sitting at the Queen's side of the carriage, and he rode at the King's, but she often turned her head to gaze at her lover.

Great prestige was imparted to him in her eyes by his position as General of the Army. She, too, had led troops at the time of the Fronde, and ever since then had been immensely interested in military matters.

She met Lauzun next day in the antechamber when she was on her way to Mass. Rochefort—who, she records delightedly, was dying of jealousy—was also present, and she called him to her, saying that she did not dare to summon the general of an army. Lauzun came to her laughing, and they had a little talk. Later on she had the satisfaction

of watching from the window while M. de Soubise stood hat in hand to receive some order from the little general, who only removed his own hat for a moment. The respect with which he was treated pleased the Grande Mademoiselle extremely, and when they met in the evening she told him of her satisfaction.

At seven o'clock next day, May 4, 1670, the expedition left Saint-Quentin in frightful weather. Being Saturday, no fish nor fresh eggs could be procured, and the bread was not properly cooked, so that only a very bad dinner was forthcoming, even for the royal party, and smaller individuals must indeed have fared badly. However, Mademoiselle was in the right mood to make the best of everything, and enjoyed herself thoroughly, in spite of the fact that the roads were so thickly covered with mud that the route was encumbered by dead horses, mules, and carts, which could not be extricated from the morass. The jolting and consequent fatigue to those in the carriages must have been most trying, and the rain came down in torrents. Mademoiselle, who was at any rate under cover, was much troubled about Lauzun, as he rode beside the carriage wet to the skin. The troubles of the unfortunate travellers were not yet over, for when at nightfall they reached the marshy ground near Landrecies, they heard that owing to the violent rain the Sambre had risen so high that

it was hardly safe to pass by the ford, and that a gentleman who had tried to cross in his carriage and discovered this to be impossible, had sought safety on an island in the middle of the stream ; but the water still rising, he had been obliged to abandon the carriage, unharness the horses, and, mounting one of them, had been only too thankful to find himself at last on dry land.¹

They were told, however, that there was a safer ford at another part of the river. The King got on horseback to examine into the matter, but the Queen and Mademoiselle were so terrified at the idea of crossing the water that they screamed loudly, in spite of their knowledge that the noise would annoy the King.

At last it was settled that no attempt should be made to cross the river that night, and the Queen and Mademoiselle sought refuge in a little two-roomed hovel. It was now ten o'clock and quite dark. However, they had a candle, and by the light of this the Queen attempted to make her way from one room to the other, Madame de Bethune lighting and helping her, while Mademoiselle held her train. In a moment, however, the Queen complained that her train-bearer was holding her back, and it transpired that the unfortunate Mademoiselle had tumbled into a hole in the floor, and was wet up to her knees.

¹ Pellisson-Fontanier, May 4, 1670, "Lettres historiques."

The Queen was, as it may well be imagined, in a condition of extreme agitation, but the King, cool and practical as ever, endeavoured to make the best of things, and suggested that as the only available lodging seemed impossible, the carriages should be used as sleeping-places. Mademoiselle therefore retired to hers, loosened her clothing, put a hood over her head, a dressing-gown over her other clothes, and prepared herself to sleep. However, the noise was so great that she found this impossible, and, hearing Monsieur's voice, asked where he was. She was told that his carriage was near at hand, and gave orders that she should be carried there. She found Madame in a state of utter exhaustion. During the whole of this journey Henriette d'Orléans was in very low spirits. Her health was delicate, and Monsieur gave her no peace, for besides being, with perhaps some reason, indignant at her many flirtations, he was intensely jealous of her superior knowledge of State affairs, and was specially furious because he realised that there was some political object in her journey to England, and that he was not admitted to the secret. Remembering the disturbances constantly fomented by the former Monsieur, Gaston, Louis XIII.'s only brother, and father to the Grande Mademoiselle, it was Louis XIV.'s settled policy to deny his brother even the smallest semblance of political influence ; besides, Monsieur

was an inveterate chatterer—no secret would have been safe with him.

When Mademoiselle arrived at the carriage, Monsieur was chatting to M. Villeroy, and as she came near she heard him say, "I would not for anything show myself to every one in the condition Lauzun has been in. He did not show to advantage with wet hair ; in fact, I have never seen a man look so hideous."¹ M. de Villeroy answered in the same tone ; and Mademoiselle, who thought Lauzun's appearance was charming in whatever condition he might be, naturally soon became annoyed with the conversation, and retired to her own carriage. She was terribly hungry, and when the news was sent round that the King and Queen were going to have supper, she had herself carried to their carriage, for the mud was so thick that it was impossible to walk.

She found the Queen very unhappy, saying that she would certainly be ill if she could not sleep, and asking what pleasure there could be in making journeys like this. The King, with admirable patience, was doing all he could to console her, by telling her that the party would take refuge in the cottage, where mattresses were being conveyed, and that a perfectly new bed had been found for her. She exclaimed in horror, "What !

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 110.

all sleep together!"¹ The King answered that he did not see any harm in this, and referred this point of etiquette to Mademoiselle as an authority on the subject. As the alternative would have meant that the party must spend the night in their carriages, Mademoiselle naturally agreed with the King, and the Queen was overruled. This was her usual rôle in life, and it had made her peevish.

The King then left the carriage to superintend the arrangements, and at last food was brought from Landrecies. It consisted of very unappetising soup with no meat in it, and the Queen pouted and said she could not eat it. The King, Monsieur and Madame, and Mademoiselle, being very hungry, promptly set to work to consume the decoction; and when the dish was empty the Queen cried, like a spoilt child, that she would have liked some if they had not eaten it all up, whereupon the rest of the party found it very difficult not to laugh. The next course consisted of unpleasant-looking pieces of meat, and of chickens which were so tough that if their legs were pulled in opposite directions, it required the utmost strength to get them apart. Such was the best food the inhabitants of Landrecies could provide for their Sovereign, and this fact—the modern reader might naturally think—would have roused in the King's mind qualms about the con-

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 111.

dition of these army-ridden provinces. Apparently, however, no such uncomfortable reflections entered Louis' mind ; he bore the bad state of the provisions with the same philosophy with which he had put up with the other hardships on the route, and thought no further about the matter.

A fire had been made in the hut, and the atmosphere must have been a thick fog from the wet in the walls and unplanked floor. The bed for the Queen was put at one corner of the fire, and the curtains drawn back so that she could see the whole of the room, while the rest of the floor was covered with mattresses. On the one nearest the bed lay Madame de Thianges and Madame de Bethune ; then came Monsieur and Madame ; the King and Mademoiselle occupied the next mattress ; Madame de la Vallière and Madame de Montespan, the curiously assorted couple known as "ces dames," shared another ; while a fifth, which was turned the other way, held the Duchesse de Créqui, the Marquise de la Vallière, and one of the Queen's maids-of-honour. Every one put on their nightcaps and dressing-gowns over their clothes, and collected as many cloaks and coverings as they could find.

It was an uncomfortable night. Lauzun and all the King's principal officers were lodged in the inner room of the hut, and there was no peace for the occupants of the outer room, as the little General was continually summoned to give

orders, and on one occasion, as he jumped over the mattresses to get to the door, he caught his foot in La Vallière's head-dress, and made every one laugh except the Queen, who could not see that there could possibly be any cause even for a smile in this miserable condition of affairs. At last, however, when Madame de Thianges made some comical remark about the lowing of the cattle in the stable behind making her think of Christmas and feel devotional, even she was amused; and the King was pleased at this, for he hated to hear her grumble.

At four o'clock in the morning Louvois appeared to say that it was getting light, and that the bridge had been made. The inhabitants of the hut looked very miserable as they rose from their uncomfortable couches. The ladies had no rouge with which to repair the ravages of a sleepless night, and their head-dresses were disordered. Mademoiselle flattered herself that she looked better than the rest of the party, as she was very strong and always had a good colour. Her appearance was of some moment to her, as she must necessarily be seen by her lover before she had time to array herself becomingly.

She was touched by the evidences of his care for her comfort, for some troops were sent by his orders to escort her women and effects over the bridge as soon as she had arrived at Landrecies, and in

consequence she was able to have everything comfortable and to go to bed by seven o'clock in the morning. She met Lauzun later in the day, and he scolded her for the terror she had shown at passing over the water, saying that it had troubled the King. He instructed her how she might in the future please Louis in different ways, and she told him how uneasy she had been when she saw him riding along execrable roads in a drenched condition. It was pleasant to be advised—even to be rebuked by him, as it seemed to prove that he was at any rate thinking about her.

Before this momentous journey she had never seen his dragoons ; and as the Court stayed a few days at Landrecies she had plenty of opportunity for inspecting them, and never failed to do so on all possible occasions, however bad the rain and wind might be. She was especially pleased when the King admired them, telling her about the different manœuvres in which they had been engaged, praising their state of discipline, and saying that they belonged completely to Lauzun, and had never done anything except under his orders. He called Lauzun specially to his carriage to tell him that Mademoiselle had never seen his dragoons before, and that she was much struck by their smart appearance. At a somewhat later date, people said that Lauzun's temerity in aspiring to the hand of Louis XIV.'s cousin was caused by his knowledge

that he was favoured in the matter by the King himself, and certainly anecdotes like this favour the supposition.

Lauzun displayed before Mademoiselle's enraptured eyes other qualities besides those of a brilliant soldier. He was good to his subordinates—he was adored by them. After the party had left Landrecies, he rode up to the royal carriage, and had in a low voice a long conversation with the King about the preferment of one of his majors, Mademoiselle being delighted to notice the familiar though respectful terms on which he was with his royal master. Her pleasure was a little diminished by the fact that the rain was again coming down in torrents, and that Lauzun rode hat in hand during his interview with the King. “Do, Sir, command him to put on his hat; he will be ill!” she cried; and she repeated this request so often that she began to be afraid that her solicitude would be noticed.

Occasionally Lauzun was hardly gracious to his lady-love, and he was always specially brusque before a third person, for he did not share—as we know—Mademoiselle's happy confidence that all would certainly be well, and realised that he might be ruined by an indiscreet word or action. The stakes for which he was playing, if we leave such intangible things as feelings and hearts out of the question, were higher than those she risked, failure most

probably entailing for him loss of the King's favour and consequent ruin ; whereas without him, Mademoiselle would still be Duchesse de Montpensier, first cousin to the King, and the greatest heiress in Europe. Therefore he temporised, not wishing to burn his boats behind him. Possibly people were already beginning to make awkward remarks ; for one day when the Comte d'Ayen was present and Lauzun appeared before Mademoiselle powdered and richly costumed, he made excuses for his elegance, saying that he knew that he was too old to trouble about his appearance, and that he had only donned these fine clothes because the suit he generally wore was wet through. He further explained that he came into the Princess's apartments by chance, and must leave at once. "I said to him, 'You are surely not sorry to be here, as you may be useful to me?' 'No,' said he ; 'but I shall not be useful for long, as I am going.'"¹

The Comte d'Ayen was horrified at his rudeness, and exclaimed : "You are mad, to talk like that to Mademoiselle !"

When d'Ayen had gone, he softened, and thanked the Princess for the kindness she had shown, when she advised the King to lodge his troops in the town because of the bad weather. In fact their conversation became so tender and confidential that

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 118.

even Mademoiselle—who is generally far from reticent, and often appears absolutely impervious to possible ridicule—remarks that she cannot repeat what he said to her. Others, she says advisedly, would not be touched, and might laugh. However, in a moment she relents, for she has, after all, never heard words of love before ; and though she will never forget them, it seems a pity that they should not be recorded while they are fresh in her memory. So she tells us with pardonable pride—for pretty speeches from her lover are few and far between—that he assured her that although the command he had been given was far above his deserts, and the way in which the King bestowed it was most flattering, he was often terribly weary of it. For it meant marching at the head of his troops, being with them continually, so that it took from him time which might be better employed. “How might it be better employed ?” inquired the ingenuous Mademoiselle. But Lauzun was silent. Then he said that sometimes he felt inclined to retire to a hermitage : “I have such great and beautiful hopes, and if they fail me I shall die of grief ; I shall do wisely if I forestall my disappointment by retiring from the world.”

He went on to relieve her mind about La Vallière, of whom she was still extremely jealous, and informed her with ready tact that if he were ever to think of marriage, the one necessity in his eyes

would be that his wife should be of absolutely moral character. He would rather marry Mademoiselle's chambermaid, if he loved her, than any one—even she, who stood on a pedestal above all the rest of the world—if her conduct were not absolutely immaculate. “But you would approve of me?” said the naïve Mademoiselle; “I have done nothing which could displease you.” “Don't make jests when we are talking seriously,” he answered. “Well, let us talk about me,” she answered; “when are you going to allow me to take my resolution, and to leave the condition for which you tell me you feel so much pity?”

This was almost too much plain speaking on the part of the lady; and the only response she received was: “You have forgotten that my ambassador is waiting for me.”

However, on this occasion he was evidently loath to leave his lady-love, and lingered on; so that she was able to tell him that she had been awakened by his troops at two o'clock in the morning, and that she had at first felt very angry; but that when she heard his voice and knew that he was out in the rain, her anger was turned to pity.

Rochefort now came out, and Mademoiselle, with the frankness characteristic of her period, questioned him about Lauzun's past love-affairs. The report he gave her was most satisfactory. Except Madame de la Sablière—well known in our time as the

patroness of La Fontaine, whom Mademoiselle calls "a little woman of the town," Lauzun was now on intimate terms with no woman, but lived a retired life, completely taken up with the work of making his way at Court.

The news was highly pleasant to her, and she determined, if possible, to bring her matrimonial affair quickly to a conclusion.

Therefore a few days later, she informed Lauzun that she had almost decided who should be the person he called "the happy man," and that the matter now only awaited his approbation. Her intention was to speak to the King, to have the affair settled at once and to be married in Flanders, as a marriage there would cause less excitement than in Paris. Lauzun drew back in alarm : "Ah, do not do that ! I will not allow it ; as the chief of your Council, I oppose that," he cried. However, he told her that one of his admirers had drawn his horoscope, and had told him that he would "make the greatest fortune a man had ever made by marriage."¹

Even the Grande Mademoiselle must have realised that it was only necessary to wait. Occasionally, however, the grain of oddity in Lauzun manifested itself in a disconcerting fashion. It must have been mortifying when one day Mademoiselle leant on him as she got out of her carriage, and he rushed

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 125.

away so that she nearly fell. However, she says that she was not angry, as she quite understood his reasons. To the modern reader they seem a combination of ambition, intense fear of over-reaching himself, and occasionally distrust and dislike of the middle-aged woman who was infatuated with him.

Sometimes he acted the part of the lover quite creditably, as the poor Princess records with pathetic pleasure. Each evening, for instance, when he left the King, he looked up at her window, and she never failed him—she was always there.

Meanwhile, to the accompaniment of festivities and fêtes of all sorts, the cumbrous travelling-party made its way slowly to Dunkirk.

At Lille the decorations in honour of the French King were specially gay, the streets being adorned with branches of trees; while the upper stories of the houses were hung with blue, decorated with fleurs-de-lis cut out in paper. The King distributed much money in Lille. His accommodation was magnificent, his room being hung with Gobelin tapestry. The bed he carried with him had velvet curtains covered with gold embroidery, and was so large that even in Lille, where he was well lodged, it touched the door and window, and that it was impossible to receive the Spanish Ambassador as etiquette dictated, in the “ruel” or railed-in space round it.¹

¹ Pelisson-Fontainer, May 17, 1670, “Lettres historiques.”

When the expedition arrived at Dunkirk, where Madame was to embark for her visit to her brother, Monsieur's discontent and ill-temper came to a climax, and he remarked before her one day in the carriage : " It has been predicted to me that I shall have several wives ; and I can quite believe it, for from Madame's state of health one can see she will not live long ; indeed, it has been foretold to her that she will soon die." ¹

After his wife had left, he abused her terribly to Mademoiselle, who feared they would never be reconciled.

For her part, Mademoiselle was much troubled at this time by an idle rumour to the effect that the Queen of England was going to retire to a convent, and that she had been selected to take her place. This report was naturally most alarming ; and when the gossip was discussed before her in the travelling-carriage she wept, while Louis said, with his usual good sense, " What ! cry about a rumour ! " Madame de Montespan thought it would be delightful : " You know each other so well ! " she cried ; " he was so much in love with you ! It will be charming ; you will write letters to the King, you will get yourself a thousand presents, everything that is new and pretty ! " ² But Mademoiselle continued to weep, and following Lauzun's

¹ " Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 129.

² *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 133.

directions about paying her court to the King, diplomatically ascribed her distress to despair at the idea of leaving her royal cousin.

Whatever Lauzun's feelings may have been, he was wise enough to know that it would be highly impolitic to appear to be an obstacle in the way of any projects of marriage the King might make for his cousin. "As for me," he said in a disinterested manner, "I approve extremely of your becoming a great Queen in a country where you may be useful to the King, and there is nothing in my power I would not do to further this. I honour the King of England greatly—he is an accomplished man, and one of the King's friends. Now, can you doubt that I wish for the matter passionately?"

Mademoiselle makes the comment that Lauzun did not mean what he was saying, and there is no doubt that for once she was right, and that he thought the report not worthy of credence, for after giving utterance to these highly disinterested sentiments he allowed himself to be drawn into the window, that he and Mademoiselle might amuse themselves with giving their opinions on the people of quality who passed below. After many had passed, and the Princess had spoken slightly of them all, Lauzun said, "From what I see, you will not choose one of these." "Certainly not. I wish the right one would pass so that I might

show him to you. Let me see, who has not passed ?” He said, “Charost ; he is with the King.” At this moment the Comte d’Ayen came in, and Mademoiselle said, “Here is another who will not pass. We must search, for there is still some one else.” He smiled, and they changed the subject.¹

About this time Lauzun began to call his big artillery into action. His clever sister, Madame de Nogent, had been instructed to make herself agreeable to Mademoiselle during the journey, and had earned with her the reputation of having both wit and merit. It is amusing to see that Mademoiselle was still rather jealous of La Vallière, and that she asked Madame de Nogent whether she had not been much distressed at the reports which coupled La Vallière’s name with that of Lauzun. Madame de Nogent replied diplomatically that both she and her brother had been in despair !

Meanwhile, Lauzun worked with caution and secrecy. His negotiations with the dispossessed Prince of Lorraine were no doubt in progress, and Madame de Montespan was in the secret, and had promised her help with Louis XIV.

In fact, when the Court returned from its perambulations it seemed as though everything was progressing most satisfactorily, till an event took place which for the time upset Lauzun’s and Mademoiselle’s calculations completely.

¹ “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 135.

The Court, after visiting Versailles, had settled at Saint-Germain, and Madame arrived from England on June 12, 1670, flushed with triumph at the success of her negotiations, and "as beautiful as an angel." She was very tired, and stayed in bed the whole of the day after her journey. Monsieur was still extremely sulky, and to annoy her insisted on remaining in Paris when the Court went to Versailles. She came there a little later on her way to Saint-Cloud to see the Queen, looking, in spite of her rouge, like a dead woman, and with tears in her eyes when she left. On June 29, 1670, news came to the Court that she was dangerously ill—worse, that she said she was poisoned. The timid and undecided Queen could not make up her mind whether or no she would go to see her dying sister-in-law, and it was not till the King appeared that the matter was at last decided ; and he, the Queen, the Comtesse de Soissons, and the Grande Mademoiselle, packed themselves into the carriage and started for Saint-Cloud.

The scene at Madame's death-bed has often been described. She was in terrible pain, and according to Mademoiselle her appearance was so ghastly that any one would have thought her dead if she had not cried out continually. Mademoiselle asked whether a confessor had been sent for, and was told by Monsieur that Madame's confessor was of no use except to look well in a carriage, but that he thought that in

the case of acute illness more than that was wanted. Who was there whose name would look well in the Gazette as having been present at her death? It was a difficult question; and he pondered for some time without coming to a conclusion. It was a relief when Mademoiselle thought of Bossuet, who was, she said, both clever and good, and to whom Madame had sometimes spoken. This matter decided, the Royal Family took their leave; the King talking much to Madame and kissing her tenderly when he said good-bye, while Mademoiselle—always terrified at the sight of death—cried so bitterly that she did not feel equal to going near the sufferer.

The royal party then returned to Versailles, and before the poor little Madame had expired, Mademoiselle had begun to think of the probable results of her death on her own prospects. By this time Lauzun and she had approached very nearly to each other. He had shown most plainly his jealousy about Monsieur de Longueville, whose proposed marriage with Mademoiselle was still supposed to be under consideration; and she had announced that she was determined to speak to the King, and to have everything arranged before July 1. He had backed her up by saying that he was now as anxious to get the matter settled as she was; a way of expressing his feelings which—if hardly gallant—was at any rate practically satisfactory.



From a plate by W. A. Maseria Co. illustrating Versailles
HENRIETTE D'ORLÉANS WITH THE PORTRAIT OF PHILIPPE
DE FRANCE

Now, however, a great obstacle seemed likely to arise between the lovers ; and at supper, after the return from Saint-Cloud, Mademoiselle said to Lauzun, " Here is something which will disconcert us." He replied : " Very much ; I fear it will upset all our plans." She cried, " Ah no, that can never be, whatever happens ! "

Mademoiselle spent a sleepless night ; and at six o'clock in the morning news came that Henriette d'Orléans had died three hours earlier (June 30, 1670). She was only twenty-six years old. The King was much affected at the news of the death of his sister-in-law, which he mentioned when he was an old man as one of the great tragedies of his life, because of the dark suspicions of poisoning attached to it. Later in the day, Bossuet came to tell him about the Princess's last moments, which had been spent in a truly edifying condition of penitence.

Thus the morning was given up to sorrow ; but after dinner the King took Mademoiselle within the enclosure round the Queen's bed and said, " Cousin, here is a vacant place ; will you step into it ? " She became as pale as death and said, " You are master ; I have no will but yours." She would say nothing more, and he left her, expressing his intention to work to further the matter.

In the evening, Mademoiselle asked Lauzun whether he were not distressed at Madame's death.

He answered, "I lose more than anybody ; and am in despair." Mademoiselle answered that she had also loved Henriette very much, but that at this juncture her sorrow was increased by the fact that her death retarded their affair, though it should never put a stop to it. She noticed to her dismay that Lauzun was already changed in his demeanour, and that he would not talk long to her.

The next day—July 1—began Lauzun's three months in office as Captain of the Guards, which entailed constant attendance on the King.

He was more self-controlled than Mademoiselle ; and meeting her at Mass that evening, he said, "Well, so you are going to marry Monsieur ?" Mademoiselle replying that she had not the slightest intention of doing this, he said, "You must do it ; the King wishes it. At least, I shall always be the friend of Mesdames, for the dead one loved me ; and I beg you to do the same." "Ah !" cried Mademoiselle in anguish ; "that marriage shall never be !" "Yes, and I shall be very glad of it, for I prefer your greatness to any joy or fortune for myself ; and am only too grateful to you for having had other wishes."¹

The next day, while the King was at Council, Lauzun, who had asked for an audience, spoke urgently to Mademoiselle about the necessity of her marriage with Monsieur, telling her that it was the

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 155.

King's wish that it should take place, and that she must obey blindly and without reasoning. To marry Monsieur would, he said, be to make a splendid match, he being the greatest man in France next to the King and the Dauphin. The King and all the Court would go every day to see her ; there would be comedies, balls, and all sorts of pleasures. Here Mademoiselle interrupted him indignantly. She was not, she cried, a girl of fifteen ; she did not yearn for amusements suitable to children. She had her own plan for happiness, and whatever he said this would not change. "You must forget the past," said Lauzun. "As for me"—he went on—"I do not now remember any longer what you formerly said to me, I have lately forgotten it all ; I only think of the pleasure it will give me to see you as Madame. When you go with your guards behind you along this pavement on your way to the new Château, I shall be at the window, and shall be delighted to see you pass. This idea occupies me continually ; and I make it my pleasure to think of your grandeur, as in time past I thought of the trouble caused you by the question of your establishment."

Lauzun's manner was gay and lively—possibly it was in some ways a relief to his mind that the question of marriage with Mademoiselle, and the consequent making or marring of his fortune, should be taken out of his hands. At any rate,

he had learnt his lesson in the Bastille, and, till maddened by an insupportable disappointment, he kept to the sure road to success—that of absolute compliance with the will of his royal master.

However, the Grande Mademoiselle was not philosophical; and when the conversation was over, she retired to her room to cry.

CHAPTER XII

The question of Mademoiselle's marriage to Monsieur—The affair comes to nothing—Lauzun's supper-party—Mademoiselle tells him she wishes to marry him—Lauzun's answer—A backward wooer—Mademoiselle writes to ask the King for his consent to her marriage with Lauzun.

THE situation seemed to be darkening for Mademoiselle, as the next day Lauzun came up to her and said: "I have come to beg you most humbly not to talk to me any more. I am unfortunate enough to have displeased Monsieur, because I was the very obedient servant of his late wife. He will now think that all the difficulties which you may make about what he wants you to do, come from me. Therefore, unless you have anything to say directly to the King, so that he will be able to say that he knows what you are telling me, I must no longer have the honour of speaking to you. Do not ask for me, wherever I am, for I shall not answer. Do not send to me, or write to me. I am in despair at having to behave like this, but I must do it, because of the love I feel for you."¹

What could the unfortunate Mademoiselle pos-

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 157.

sibly answer except that she would never marry Monsieur ; that she wanted to be happy, and was quite satisfied with the precedence to which she was entitled by birth ? Lauzun on his side stuck to his point firmly, and ended by advising her to go to Forges to drink the waters. “ At least if you have something in your head which you ought to get out as quickly as possible, and if it is the sight of somebody which keeps it there, your health will make you forget him if you never see him or speak to him, and if he is wise enough to do everything he can to cause himself to be forgotten.”¹

Mademoiselle wept again, but she went to Forges. Her only consolation there—for she was so unhappy that it seemed impossible that the waters should do her any good—was the fact that some one told her that Lauzun had spoken with the utmost indignation of the idea that he should marry La Vallière, and had said that “ the King had never yet dishonoured any one, and that he would not begin by dishonouring him.”

When she returned from Forges, she was received by Monsieur with politeness but without effusion ; and the King told her that his brother trusted that if she had no children she would leave all her money to his eldest daughter, who would, he hoped, marry the Dauphin. Mademoiselle was

¹ “ Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 158.

naturally offended by this stipulation, and remarked that a man only made such propositions to a person inferior to him, whereas she was quite Monsieur's equal. The King further warned her that he would never entrust Monsieur with the government of any province. Anything he *did* bestow on him should be given through her agency, that her importance might be increased; but occasional presents of money, furniture, or precious stones would be the only things he would receive. One cannot be surprised that Mademoiselle said sarcastically that the King was certainly doing his best to make the affair attractive to her!

What follows, as related by Mademoiselle, certainly gives colour to the belief of her contemporaries that the King knew what was going on between her and Lauzun:—

“‘By the by,’ said the King to me, ‘is it true that when Madame died, you were going to tell me the next day the name of the person you wished to marry, and to ask my permission to do it?’ ‘If any one has told your Majesty that, it is true; if they did not tell you, it is not.’ The Queen asked, ‘What do you mean?’ The King began to laugh and said, ‘I know nothing about it. Is it M. de Longueville?’ I said, ‘No.’ ‘Who can it be? for you will only consent to marry a Prince.’¹ The King said nothing. I

¹ This was evidently said by the Queen.

said to the Queen, 'I have money and position enough to make a greater Prince, if I choose to do it, than a younger son of the house of Lorraine, and should find a more accomplished man, and one who would serve the King better than M. de Guise; and as he has consented to my sister's marriage, I dare hope that I shall do what I like, and that he will not coerce me.' The King said, 'Certainly not, I shall let you do what you like. I never coerce anybody.'"¹

Meanwhile, the circle of Monsieur's favourites were in much agitation. They had always managed to keep him under complete control, and were very much afraid of Mademoiselle's haughty and decided character. On the other hand, they felt that her money would be decidedly advantageous, and that if her marriage with Monsieur were probable, it would be well to conciliate her. One of their number, the Chevalier de Beuvron, was therefore sent as an envoy from the rest, to tell her that they approved of her taking the late Madame's place, as her money would support herself and Monsieur, and any presents the latter might receive from the King could be passed on to the coterie. This was not tactful, and Mademoiselle was naturally indignant, and told the King what Beuvron had said. His comment on the matter was: "He has talked to you like a fool;

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 163.

it is a pity my brother amuses himself with such people."

The King was evidently so lukewarm about the matter that at last Mademoiselle summoned all her courage, and told him that she begged that no one should talk any more of her marriage with Monsieur, for she was sure neither he nor she would be happy together. To her intense relief the King did not seem in the least annoyed, and merely asked her whether it was marriage in the abstract to which she objected, or merely marriage with his brother. Monsieur, on the other hand, was rather piqued when the King informed him of his cousin's ultimatum. He was very indifferent about the marriage, being much alarmed at the lady's imperious temper. On the other hand, the possession of her money would be a great advantage to one who loved to wear ever-varying and magnificent costumes, and enjoyed decking his person with all the precious stones he could muster. Besides, he did not like to hear he was so displeasing to Mademoiselle that she would not marry him, in spite of the obvious advantages in precedence she would gain by becoming his wife. He remarked, therefore, with acerbity, that he "well knew who had stopped the affair; that there were three men at the Court who were Mademoiselle's friends and not his."

The King in relating this conversation said that

his brother had promised to continue to live on friendly terms with Mademoiselle ; that no doubt he would sulk a little, but that she must pay no attention to this. In fact, Monsieur was—as usual—treated like a child by his brother.

Meanwhile, Lauzun had kept to his resolution of avoiding all occasions of meeting Mademoiselle, and would not look at her or have anything to do with her, if he were unavoidably brought into contact with her. At Chambord, Madame de Montespan, Madame de la Vallière, Mademoiselle, and he were one evening playing cards, and the ribbon of Mademoiselle's cuff coming untied, she begged him to tie it. He at once refused, saying that he was not clever enough to do it, and the Grande Mademoiselle was obliged to resort to the kindly offices of Madame de la Vallière. However, it is amusing to see that when he did come across her by chance and knew that no one was watching, he said what would, he knew, most tend to make a proud woman draw back from the alliance proposed to her, for meeting her one day on her way to Mass, he remarked that every one said that she was most anxious to become Monsieur's wife, and that she urged the King continually to bring about the marriage.

When the Court went to Saint-Germain, Lauzun rode beside the carriage, and Mademoiselle was next to him. He twisted his face into grimaces, and made childish remarks, as though he were imbecile. This,

according to Saint-Simon, was one of his favourite poses when he wished to make fun of people. He would then say things which were utterly nonsensical, as when he assured M. de Bouillon that the only way to obtain good chocolate was to make, strain, and twist it on the stone of an apricot ; or told the King that he did not like hunting the stag, as it was running over open tombs.¹ The Grande Mademoiselle, however, felt that she quite understood him, so she only smiled at the King and said nothing. At Saint-Germain, Lauzun continued to avoid her, and when he pursued the same tactics at Versailles, where the Court went for a two-days' excursion, she could bear his silence no longer, but stopped and spoke to him as he stood on guard at the King's door. "Thank Heaven, the affair with Monsieur is broken off," she said ; "I can talk to you now, and I have something to say to you." He answered : "When you please" ; and she answered : "I will meet you to-morrow in the Queen's room."

He was punctual to the appointment, and she told him all that had happened. He approved warmly of what she had done, and she said that she now returned to her first plan, as she believed that what she proposed would be for the repose of her life, and was the condition in which God wished her to be. He begged her not to be in

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 334.

a hurry, and to examine everything carefully. Much was going on in the background about which the innocent lady was completely in the dark, and while, as of wont, she played her hand clumsily, that skilful player Lauzun—while feigning total ignorance of the game—watched, waited, and schemed to get the cards sorted to his own advantage.

About this time (September 4, 1670) Don Miguel d'Iturieta, Spanish Chargé d'Affaires in France, tells of a supper-party given in honour of the Duke of Buckingham by "the Marquis de Puyguilhem, Captain of the Guards and favourite of the King."¹ The assembled party consisted of one of Lauzun's mistresses, Madame de Thianges (sister to Madame de Montespan), the Marquise de la Vallière, (sister-in-law to Louise de la Vallière), the Duke of Buckingham, and two other Englishmen. While supper was in progress music went on, and after the repast a masked cavalier and two ladies came in and danced. After a short time the ladies who had been at supper surrounded the masked cavalier, and vied with each other in admiring his sword, which was of unusual magnificence, and in fact was worth 16,000 louis. They soon joined in the dance, and at each change of figure appeared to marvel anew at the magnificent work of art. This continued till they at last took away the sword and presented it to the Duke of Buckingham. The

¹ Ravaisson, "Archives de la Bastille," vol. iv. p. 45.

dancers then unmasked, and—of course, to every one's surprise—two of them proved to be the King and Madame de Montespan. Louis then approached Buckingham, and said that as the ladies had disarmed him, he begged the Duke's acceptance of his sword. "*Autre temps, autre mœurs.*" This ballet, the account of which sounds rather comical to our modern ears, was no doubt at that time considered a most graceful and charming condescendence on the part of Louis le Grand.

Meanwhile, the Grande Mademoiselle continued to press her point with praiseworthy perseverance in the face of continual discouragements, for Lauzun still held back, determined that each step forward should be on the lady's side. She told him that she wished to let him know the name of the man she had chosen, but he refused to listen, saying, "This choice makes me tremble. Do not talk to me of it." "The more he excused himself, the more I begged him to advise me," says the innocent Mademoiselle.

One Thursday, becoming desperate, she called him after supper, as he passed through the Queen's antechamber on the way to the King. "I am determined to tell you who it is!" she cried. "Wait till to-morrow." "That will not do, for it will be Friday." "Ah! I shall not be able to tell you to your face what I think about it," protested the gentleman. "If I had a writing-table here, I would

write it ; I shall blow on the mirror and write it there ! ” replied Mademoiselle.¹ They jested about the matter for half an hour, and then twelve o’clock struck, and it was too late to reveal the secret ; as the Princess was superstitious, and would not declare anything important on a Friday.

After all, however, it was on the Friday that she wrote on a sheet of paper, “It is you !” sealed it, and put it in her pocket. That evening she did not see Lauzun till supper-time. Then she told him that the name was written on a piece of paper in her pocket, but that being Friday she could not give it to him. He begged for it, saying that he would put it under his pillow, and only open it after midnight ; and that till then he would lie sleepless, and await with the utmost anxiety and agitation the time when he might read it. However, he told her he was going to Paris next day and would not return till Sunday, so she said she would wait till then to give him the name ; and no doubt passed the time in ever-increasing agitation.

Lauzun, too, may well have passed a sleepless night. He was nearing the crucial point in his life, when a false step would ruin everything ; and although he had planned matters to the best of his ability, there was much about which to feel anxious.

On Sunday—after his return from Paris—he met

¹ “ Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 172.

Mademoiselle as usual in the Queen's circle, and they talked together after dinner. When the Queen went in to prayers, Mademoiselle stayed with him near the fireplace. Then she drew out the important paper, showed it to him, put it coquettishly into her pocket, and the pocket into her muff. He begged her earnestly to give it to him, saying that his heart was beating, and that he could not understand what she meant. The rest of their conversation was rather embarrassed, but at last, after much playful hesitation, Mademoiselle gave him the folded sheet of paper, saying : " You will answer on the same sheet whatever you think suitable, and this evening we will talk together in the Queen's apartments." ¹

It was an agitating time for both parties. Mademoiselle went to church with the Queen, where she prayed to God—not without wanderings of thought, she candidly admits, but nevertheless from her heart. On their return, the Queen went, as she always did, to see the Dauphin, and Mademoiselle and Lauzun were left by the fireplace. The weather was most inclement. They did not dare to talk or to look at each other. Mademoiselle knelt down to warm herself, saying that she was stupefied with cold. He answered that he was much more stupefied by what he had seen on the sheet of paper ; but that he was not silly enough to be taken in by

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 173.

it, for he knew quite well that she was making fun of him. She replied that what she had written was serious and well considered.

Nothing more was said then ; but in the evening he presented himself before her several times, though neither dared speak to the other—at least, that was what the Grande Mademoiselle thought. However, he gave her back her sheet of paper ; and she records the interesting fact that she leant on him as she rose from her seat. As soon as she could manage it she rushed to the nearest empty room to tear open the paper, and to read the words which would bring her either intense happiness or utter misery.

On the paper, under the words “It is you,” Lauzun had written a letter in which he complained that his zeal in her service should be rewarded by raillery. He said that she could not possibly be serious, and that therefore he did not dare to answer her in any other way, but that he felt such devotion to her that he would always submit to her wishes. The Grande Mademoiselle saw in these words, as it was intended that she should, “a great respect not without affection.” His sister, that clever Madame de Nogent, whom Mademoiselle at this time considered charming, was not so guarded in her behaviour ; for a day or two earlier, when Mademoiselle had asked her to guess which of the three suitors—Monsieur, the Duc de Longueville, or

Lauzun—she would marry, she had thrown herself on her knees before her, and kissed her feet for an hour. No doubt the incident was at once passed on to her equally clever brother. The Court was by this time much amused by the affair, and though they only looked upon it as an absurdity, and never thought of so serious a thing as marriage, Mademoiselle had to put up with much badinage on the subject, being told when she wore new shoes that she looked just the sort of lady to make the fortune of a younger son of good family. Therefore, it must have been rather annoying that when every one else saw how the matter was going, the principal party, without whose participation the affair could not be possibly carried any further, should be so strangely blind to the real state of her feelings.

The next day, however, she had a serious conversation with her backward wooer; and a most curious one it was. He still affected to believe that she was not in earnest, and announced that he would only discuss the matter because he saw that it amused her to make fun of him, and because it was naturally his duty to obey her behests, and to fall in with her humour. If, however, he were to pretend that he considered her proposition serious, he must put one thing clearly before her—he loved the King so dearly that he would never leave him, or give up his present position at Court, even if he were offered the government of a province. He

had no ambition, and did not want a higher position than the one he possessed, for he loved a condition of subjection ; and was so much engrossed with the King that if he were ever to have a wife he would see very little of her. He spoke candidly of the incompatibility of temper between himself and the Princess. She apparently loved conversation, whereas he was fond of solitude, would shut himself up in his room for three or four hours at a time, and felt as though he should kill any one who disturbed him.

It is curious to see that the passion for being alone had begun at this period of his life. It was evidently constitutional, for Saint-Simon speaks of it as one of the most marked characteristics of his later days, and ascribes it to habits acquired during his long imprisonment.¹

On one point, however, Lauzun reassured his lady-love, and that was the most important of all—he promised that he would never give her cause for jealousy, as he did not now care for women, in fact disliked their society as much as he had at one time enjoyed it. The one thing he really loved was the state which would displease most people—subjection to a master.

There was no doubt a good deal of truth in this last assertion, whatever there may have been in the one which preceded it, but it was put cleverly and

¹ Saint-Simon, "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 340.

diplomatically, for if the conversation were by any chance repeated to Louis XIV., what greater encouragement could he have to raise his favourite to what might appear to be dangerous heights, than the knowledge that that favourite was absolutely unambitious, and would always find his sole pleasure in serving his King? Lauzun was, as ever, tactful : he knew his Bourbons to the core.

It was a strange wooing, and perhaps, as he looked at the middle-aged imperious Princess, Lauzun may have felt a sudden qualm of reluctance. She replied, however, that she admired and entered into his sentiments, and that her first cousin was her master as well as his. He dwelt upon the fact that he was only a simple gentleman, and that she should by rights marry a Prince, to which she replied that she could offer him sufficient dignity and property to make him the greatest nobleman in the kingdom. "After all this," he finished, "do you wish for me?" She answered, "Yes, I wish for you; all these characteristics are agreeable to me." "Do you find nothing in my personal appearance which displeases you?" asked Lauzun. "When you say you are afraid of not pleasing, you are making fun of people," said the amorous lady; "you have pleased only too well during your life; but as to me? Do you find anything disagreeable in my face? I think my only outward fault is my bad teeth; but that is a defect with all my race, and

that race can well carry off a few." "Assuredly," he replied. "But answer!" she cried anxiously—"I only speak of my faults to show that I am aware of them." "You have none," he replied. He finished in the tone on which he wished to insist in case of accidents: "As to everything else, I will say nothing further. You will be able to laugh at me for the rest of your life. I have discussed all this in jest: I am sorry that you like to jest, and would rather not be the object of it, but as you love doing it, I have nothing further to say, except that I am not mad nor a visionary, and that the more you say about the matter the less I believe in it."¹

Lauzun was certainly determined not to burn his boats behind him.

However, after supper he was more explicit, for he said, "There are moments when I believe it is not an illusion. I give myself over to joy; then I return to common sense and know that it cannot be."

A description of the appearance of the man who caused the Grande Mademoiselle to step down from her royal pedestal may not be out of place at this point. According to the unflattering statement of his future brother-in-law, Saint-Simon, who, it must be premised, only knew him in his later years, "he was little, thin, very well made and proportioned,

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 179.

with the most beautifully shaped leg in the world, even till his extreme old age. He had a blotched face rather like that of a skinned cat, beautiful eyes, and a keen, daring, haughty physiognomy, with a smile which showed depth and falsity." Saint-Simon adds that "those who saw him in his youth declare that he was never better-looking than he has been since his return to Court, and that, besides, he used to have tow-coloured hair, which has been since hidden by a fair wig."¹

Another writer tells us that he was of "insignificant figure and mediocre looks"²; La Fare does not enlarge on his looks, but remarks that "he is the most insolent little man who has been seen for a century."³

We may discount these testimonies as being those of rivals or enemies; but what says the Grande Mademoiselle, in the height of her infatuation, of her lover's appearance? "He is a little man; nobody can deny that he has the straightest, most elegant and finest figure imaginable. His legs are beautifully shaped; he does everything with grace. He has fair hair—there is not much of it and it is becoming grizzled, it is badly combed, and often greasy; beautiful blue eyes, though they are nearly always bloodshot; a keen expression and

¹ "Écrits inédits," vol. vii. p. 308.

² "La France Galante," p. 51.

³ Petitot, "Mémoires," ser. ii. vol. lxxv. p. 180.

graceful air. His smile pleases. The end of the nose is pointed, and red ; there is something superior in his physiognomy ; he is very careless about his appearance ; but when it pleases him to be so, extremely well turned out. Such is the man. As to his moods and his disposition, I defy any one to understand them, to describe or to copy them.”¹

The description is not certainly that of an Adonis ; but what did that matter ? Lauzun possessed the charm of wit, tact, vitality, and of that grain of oddity which in his later years was only separated by a thin partition from madness, but which in his palmy days only gave piquancy to his personality, by investing it with the supreme attraction emanating from vivid and intense personality. He was alarming, cruel, delightful, incalculable—he was like no one else. His bon-mots were repeated with relish, his practical jokes were huge fun—except to their victims. It is impossible, of course, to realise his fascination from his words, though recorded so exactly by Mademoiselle that Saint-Simon says one can almost hear him speaking ;² but even in dull print they often tickle our imaginations with the diversion of the unexpected, and we cannot avoid what we fear is a misplaced affection for the little man.

For several days Lauzun and Mademoiselle talked

¹ “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 249.

² “Écrits inédits,” vol. vii. p. 316.

about the matter of their marriage without getting any nearer to a conclusion, though he promised for her sake to take the government of a province if it should be offered to him, and she told him about the greatness and beauty of her different properties. The Court moved to Paris, and they continued to have long conversations, Lauzun consistently urging caution and certainty as to her feelings, on his ardent lady-love. He talked continually about the King, descanting on his affection and respect for his Sovereign, or his fear that he might go out without him, or want him for playing cards. When Mademoiselle, who, though satisfied with very little, was occasionally conscious of possessing feelings, became impatient at this continual harping on what was to her comparatively unimportant, Lauzun remarked that ladies of her quality were not wooed like ordinary girls, and that if he were to let himself go he might say foolish things—which was no doubt just what Mademoiselle wished him to do. However, sometimes they discussed other matters, Lauzun expatiating on the beauty of the costume which would be worn by his dragoons at the March review, when they were to be mounted on Spanish, Croatian, and Barbary geldings, and were to wear new buff coats with sleeves embroidered in gold and silver. Mademoiselle proposed that their caps should be adorned with white-and-green feathers and orange ribbons, at which suggestion

her lover was delighted ; and going back to his one overmastering passion, remarked that the King would say, " My cousin takes as much pleasure in the matter as you do." ¹

These conversations broke off whenever the King appeared, as Lauzun said he had not spoken to him on the subject, though Mademoiselle declared she was certain that he knew all about it.

However, it seemed now necessary to take the all-important step of informing Louis of his cousin's wishes, and asking for his permission for her to marry Lauzun. Mademoiselle felt she could not possibly speak to him about it, but must write a letter ; and every day she pressed Lauzun for permission to do this. At last she obtained his consent, and at once set to work to compose one. She ought, she says, to have kept a copy of it, but she was so afraid that some one would come in while she was writing, and would suspect what she was doing, that she omitted this useful precaution. She gives, however, in her *Memoirs* the sense of the letter, though she says the original was longer and more pressing.

" Your Majesty will be surprised at the favour I ask of you : I wish to marry. Sire, I find myself by birth and by the honour I have of being your first cousin so much above every one that I am inclined to be satisfied with my present rank. When

¹ " *Montpensier Mémoires*," vol. iv. p. 183.

one marries a stranger one does not know his temper or his merits ; so that it is difficult to be certain of a happy lot. Mine is at present very happy, but I am sure that the condition I wish to take is still more so. Marriage is so ordinary a thing that I think no one can be blamed for wishing to be married. It is Monsieur de Lauzun whom I have selected ; his merit and the attachment he has to your Majesty are what have pleased me most in him. Your Majesty will remember how strongly I disapproved of my sister's marriage ; all that in my life I have said in which the passion of ambition has deluded me, I very humbly beg your Majesty to forget, and if it is another passion which inspires me now, to believe that it is founded on reason, and that I have thought for a long time about what I wish to do, before proposing it to your Majesty. I believe that God wishes me to find my happiness in the state of marriage : it seems to me that the repose of my life depends on it, and is impossible without it. So I ask your Majesty, as the greatest favour that you can show me, to grant me this permission. The honourable position Monsieur de Lauzun enjoys as captain of your Majesty's guards helps to render him worthy of me. The Prince of Condé, who was killed at the battle of Jarnac, was colonel of infantry before that post was a Crown office. The Princess de la Roche-sur-Yon, wife of a prince of the blood belonging to the younger

branch of the same family as my mother, was maid of honour to a Queen ; and I, Sire, should consider it a great honour to be superintendent of the Queen's household ; and when the Countess of Soissons thought she was dying, I intended to beg your Majesty very humbly in the case of the Princess of Carignan not taking up the office and it being for sale, to allow me to buy it. I say all this to Your Majesty to show you that the more highly placed one is, the more one is worthy to approach your Majesty, and that nothing is below any one and all posts impart honour, when it is the question of serving you.”¹

This letter was dispatched to Lauzun for his approval, which he gave in a submissive and grateful letter, which Mademoiselle burnt ; and was sorry afterwards, as she would have liked to have kept it to read during his imprisonment. Her own letter was then sent to Bontemps, the confidential valet, and was handed by him to the important personage on whose will her whole fortune depended.

¹ “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 183.

CHAPTER XIII

Louis XIV.'s answer—Mademoiselle's interview with him—Lauzun's anxieties—Projects of marriage for him—Preparations for Mademoiselle's and Lauzun's wedding—Deputation from nobility ask for Mademoiselle's hand for Lauzun—King gives formal consent—Monsieur's indignation—Disapproval shown by the Queen—Sensation throughout Europe—Madame de Sévigné's famous letter on the subject.

LOUIS XIV. was evidently prepared for his cousin's epistle, and he answered her at once. In his reply he said that he was much astonished at the contents of her letter, that he would not coerce her in any way, but that he advised her to consider the matter well, and to do nothing in a hurry.

Later in the day, Mademoiselle received the Dutch Ambassadors at the Luxembourg, and there was a great crowd ; but after they had gone she managed to retire with Lauzun to her little room, on the pretext that he had never seen it, and there she showed him the King's letter. She was not satisfied with it, as she had expected that the King would have given his consent at once ; but Lauzun said that it was admirable, and that he could not imagine what more she wanted.

It was cheering that when she talked to her lover before the King, he looked at them both—at least, so the Grande Mademoiselle thought—with a kindly expression. The matter was kept strictly private for the present, and they were careful not to have much conversation in public, for fear that people would gossip; but they had now so much to say to each other that, through the agency of Madame de Nogent, notes passed frequently between them.

Lauzun was apparently still afraid of Mademoiselle's impulsive precipitancy if she were to know that Louis XIV. was favourable to his suit, so he pretended that the King had never spoken to him about the matter; though, according to Bussy-Rabutin, one day in the presence of the King and Madame de Montespan, Lauzun talked so much about Mademoiselle that Louis laughed, and said that he seemed to be well acquainted with Mademoiselle de Montpensier. After a few more hints from Lauzun, Louis laughed more heartily than before, and asked whether by any chance Lauzun aspired to become his cousin! Lauzun, of course, deprecated with the utmost eloquence the notion that he could possibly entertain the criminal idea of raising himself to such unheard-of heights, and declared that he would never dare to think of such a thing without his royal master's permission.¹

¹ "La France Galante," p. 133.

There seems no doubt that Lauzun spoke thus by previous arrangement with Madame de Montespan, and that she had promised to help him ; but according to Bussy, who did not know this, being touched by the passionate yet submissive way in which Lauzun spoke, she interposed at this point, saying to the King : “ Why, Sire, should you oppose yourself to his fortune ? Leave him alone ; nobody has more merit than he, and what difference will it make to you ? ” After a little more discussion, Louis said : “ Well, Lauzun, push your fortunes ; I assure you on my word that I will help you as much as I can, and that you will see the effects of my help.” “ *La France Galante* ” is not always a trustworthy source of information, but this at least shows the trend of public opinion, and what a well-informed person like Bussy-Rabutin thought it likely had happened.

At any rate, the King did not declare himself publicly against the marriage, and everything seemed to be going happily, when matters were precipitated by Lauzun’s discovery that Guilloire, physician to the Grande Mademoiselle, had found out what was pending and had told Louvois about it, stating that the matter had been settled with the King’s participation. Mademoiselle, with her usual impetuosity, wished to dismiss the offender on the spot, but to this imprudent step Lauzun objected. However, after he had laughingly begged

Mademoiselle to go to the King and tell him she had changed her mind, Lauzun became serious, and said that as the affair had become public property, the King should at once be asked officially for his consent. Lauzun did not wish to appear in the matter : the Princess must speak according to the dictates of her own heart.

Mademoiselle had, during the last few weeks, paid her court assiduously to the Queen, and she went to her apartments this evening as usual, knowing she would meet the King there. On this important occasion, however, the King did not come from playing cards till two o'clock in the morning ; so while Mademoiselle was still there, the Queen went to bed, remarking to her cousin that she must have something extremely important to say to the King, or she would not sit up so late waiting for him. Mademoiselle, her heart beating, replied that it *was* something most important ; and that she must see him without fail before the Council next day.

At last the King appeared, and came into the enclosure which surrounded the Queen's bed. " You are up very late, cousin," he said. She answered, " It is because I want to speak to your Majesty." ¹ He placed himself between the two folding doors, saying that, having the vapours, he must lean against something. She suggested that they should sit

¹ " Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 189.

down, but he replied that it was all right where he was, and she began her task in fear and trembling. She told the King that she had not changed her mind about M. de Lauzun, whom she esteemed and loved greatly, diplomatically adding that in the first instance these feelings had been caused by the favour his Majesty had shown him. She would appreciate, she said, the dignity of remaining a subject of the King as far higher than that of becoming a foreign princess, and she was doing nothing, however evil tongues might wag, against her honour or her conscience ; in fact, the elevation of a man as extraordinarily gifted as was M. de Lauzun seemed to her a beautiful action.

In reply, the King again advised caution, though he promised that he would not hinder the affair. His cousin was of an age when she could judge for herself, and he would be sorry to coerce her in any way. Secrecy, however, was above all things necessary, for people were becoming suspicious, and his Ministers had already spoken to him about the matter. M. de Lauzun was hated by many people. "Sire," she cried enthusiastically, "if your Majesty is on our side, no one can hurt us !" She wished to kiss his hands, but he embraced her, and they separated.

She had by this time become most intimate with Madame de Nogent ; in fact, Lauzun, who considered that his sister had been talking indiscreetly, said that

he liked his family to be in awe of him, and that Mademoiselle spoilt Madame de Nogent so terribly that he thought it would be as well to send her back to Nogent. However, in the end, he only scolded her for chattering, and allowed her to stay. She was certainly useful, as she carried messages between him and Mademoiselle.

Sometimes these were hardly gallant, for a day or two later she came to the Princess and asked whether her brother might, after his marriage, continue to live in his room in the Palace. In the evening Mademoiselle inquired why Lauzun had not spoken about the matter himself, and he said he had not dared to do so. He then explained in a deprecating manner that he felt certain that she would enter into the situation, and would wish him to be always, as heretofore, at the feet of the King ; and that as he must appear every day at his Majesty's going to bed, from which he did not come out till two o'clock, and must be up at eight o'clock to be in time for his Majesty's rising, it would be difficult for him to live at the Luxembourg Palace, which was some distance from the Tuileries. Therefore, it would be better for him to have his headquarters at the Tuileries, and to see his wife as often as was practicable.

“ ‘ I said to him,’ answered the strangely humble Mademoiselle, ‘ I go every day to the Tuileries, while the Queen is saying her prayers ; I shall come

to visit you in your room.' He answered, 'But will that be correct? Will not people object?' I assured him not: he was always afraid of doing something he should not do."¹

Evidently a wife would not be allowed to interfere with the one passion of Lauzun's life, that of serving his royal master—of being in subjection, as he called it. He was evidently determined to have everything arranged so that there should be no mistake after marriage, and Mademoiselle was so enamoured and—for the first time in her life—so perfectly docile, that there was little danger in making any stipulations he chose.

The King continued to smile on the affair. When the Court had moved to Versailles, the Grande Mademoiselle stood behind Lauzun at the card table and watched his play with the keenest interest, and she tells us that Louis laughed from time to time and looked from one to the other, as though he were pleased and amused at what was going on.

On Saturday, (December 13, 1670) the Court moved back to Paris, to be present when the sermon was preached; and in the morning Lauzun came for the first time into Mademoiselle's room. He had not been idle during the last few days, for he told her he had settled that on Monday the Ducs de Créqui and de Montausier, and the Maréchals

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 192.

d'Albret and de Guित्रy should crave audience of the King as envoys sent from her, and should beg for her hand, not only in their capacity of his relations and friends, but as "deputies from the whole of the French nobility," who would welcome the fact that the King allowed a simple gentleman of good birth to marry a princess of such exalted rank, as a great honour and favour, and would quote several instances of such alliances in past history.¹

Lauzun told Mademoiselle as much of this as he considered it good for her to hear, and explained that his plan was better than her idea that he and she should go together to beg the King's permission for their marriage. He had been having a busy and anxious time for the last few weeks. The affair needed to be worked with the utmost secrecy and diplomacy, and Mademoiselle was no support in this, as it was impossible to say whether the effervescence of her emotions might not at any moment cause an explosion which would ruin everything irreparably. The backwardness Lauzun showed in declaring his feelings for her, and the way he affected to look upon her advances to him as a joke, was no doubt partly owing to the necessity of keeping so impulsive a person in check, pride preventing indiscretions on her part as long as she was doubtful as to his intentions.

¹ Petitot, "La Fare Mémoires," ser. ii. vol. lxy. p. 181.

On his side he had experienced perplexities, for the King's prime favourite was in request as a highly eligible person, and the Comte de Lude wished to marry him to his niece, Mademoiselle de Roquelaure, who was an heiress ; while the Cardinal de Retz, backed up by Madame de Montespan's sister, Madame de Thianges, was most anxious to make a match between him and Mademoiselle de Retz, who had an income of fifty thousand pounds. Both these proposals were so brilliant that it was perplexing to know how to refuse them without being considered a madman, and the position was embarrassing.

Another perplexing circumstance was the fact that the young Duc de Longueville—of whom, to Mademoiselle's delight, Lauzun pretended to be jealous—seemed disposed to make him a confidant as to his matrimonial prospects ; and Lauzun did not wish to deceive him, and yet hated the idea of betraying his secret. He therefore did his best to avoid a *tête-à-tête* with the young gentleman, and one day, when M. de Longueville had followed him home to dinner, in spite of Lauzun's declaration that he was most probably dining out, and had announced that he wished to consult his friend about an affair in which his whole fortune was concerned, Lauzun, in desperation, gave orders to his valets to admit any one who came about dinner-time. This was most contrary to his habits, for

while many of the great nobles kept open house, his doors were always most carefully barricaded against chance guests. Therefore, as was to be expected, nobody appeared, and he was obliged to dine alone with M. de Longueville. During the meal the presence of the servants made confidential conversation impossible ; but when that was over, the two men sat by the fire together, and the duke began a long preamble about his friendship for his host, and his hope that he would help him in the most important affair of his life, while Lauzun trembled and looked anxiously towards the door for succour. Fortunately, before the crucial point had been reached, a welcome interruption was made by the entrance of another friend, and the danger was averted.¹ Nevertheless, it had been an anxious moment, and at this period of his life Lauzun went through many such.

However, by now doubts and fears were over, and on this Saturday—after explaining to Mademoiselle about the envoys—he remembered that the three friends who had come to Paris with him had been waiting outside for an hour, and sent to call them in ; saying that they would be much astonished at being summoned into Mademoiselle's private room, but that the matter would now be so quickly made public that it would be as well to prepare people for it. We can imagine

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 268.

the imposing, even royal air with which the little man received his astonished comrades, and answered Guitry's surprised exclamation : "I should never have expected to find you here !" with the dignified yet suggestive remark that "everything must have a beginning." When, however, Lauzun suggested that Le Nôtre the architect should now bring in the plans, Guitry's astonishment bubbled over. "What !" he cried, "are we to transact our business in Mademoiselle's presence !" It was with a proud air of proprietorship that Lauzun answered, "She is fond of building, and will be delighted to see Le Nôtre."¹

At that moment he was tasting the best the world could give him ; such intoxicating success comes to few. It was, however, a dangerous pinnacle, and he was losing his head ; so that at this point the Grande Mademoiselle was for once wiser than he. The next day (Sunday) the marriage between Mademoiselle de Thianges, who possessed nothing, and "that M. de Nevers who is so difficult to bind, that extraordinary Monsieur de Nevers who slips through every one's hands when they least expect it,"² was to take place. The alliance of her dowerless niece with Mazarin's nephew, brother to the remarkable Mancini sisters, was a great triumph for Madame de Montespan,

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 200.

² "Séigné Lettres," December 10, 1670.

and every one talked of it with amazement as an extraordinary proof of her power. She could not, however, have managed it without Lauzun's help ; and now that it was at last a *fait accompli*, his hold over her was loosened. With eyes made keen by love, Mademoiselle had seen this danger, and had implored him only to conclude the matter after his own marriage had taken place, so that till she had fulfilled her part of the contract, Madame de Montespan might continue to be dependent on his help. Lauzun's astuteness seemed, however, to have deserted him at this juncture, and in spite of past unfortunate experiences, he trusted Madame de Montespan ; and was so sure of the continuance of the King's favour, that he considered himself perfectly safe.

The lovers parted on Saturday evening, and Lauzun told Mademoiselle that they would not meet all Sunday, as he should be very busy with the wedding arrangements. The little events of that Sunday are recorded by Mademoiselle with loving minuteness. As Madame de Longueville was very delicate and could not walk easily, Mademoiselle helped her up the church, and M. de Longueville's friends looked on with pleasure, while Lauzun smiled as she passed him, knowing that they were all deceived. In church she sat next to Madame de Sévigné, with Guitry—who had been told the great secret—beyond ; and when the service was

over, Madame de Remenecourt told her that she heard how charming M. de Lauzun was, and as Mademoiselle made no response, she asked for an introduction to him. To this Mademoiselle answered with a sense, no doubt, of pride in her own diplomacy, and perhaps a suspicion that her interlocutor meant to be impertinent, that she did not know him well enough to be able to introduce him to any one. However, she rather spoilt this dignified demeanour by exclaiming, when he came into M. d'Anjou's apartments after church, "So you are here after all, though you told me we should not meet all day!"¹

Occasionally, however, a stab would be dealt by a brutally candid friend. In the evening Mademoiselle met Madame d'Épernon, who told her in a sharp voice that she was too old to go so much to Court, and that she had been horrified when she had heard a rumour the day before that Mademoiselle intended to marry. Marriage at her age would in itself be absurd, and marriage with a boy like M. de Longueville would be especially ludicrous. The Princess summoned all her dignity and made an answer to the effect that she saw nothing ridiculous in a marriage at any age—even to a person like M. de Longueville; to which the other replied with heat, that she was surprised—even ashamed—to hear her talk in this manner.

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 202.

Next day—a momentous day in the annals of her life—Mademoiselle received directions from her lover to be early at the Tuileries. She seemed to have changed places with him, for he was already floating on the crest of triumph, while she became anxious and nervous as the fateful moment approached. When she arrived at the Palace, Lauzun came up to her, drew her into the window, and whispered: “The gentlemen have gone in; the King is at the Council, and has sent for Monsieur.”¹

Then the Queen came out of her private room, and Mademoiselle was obliged to follow her to the Récollets to be present at the sermon, though doubtless she did not hear a word of it. While there, she was told that the Duc de Montausier wished to see her, and she went into the convent parlour to receive him. After thanking her for the honour she had done him in choosing him as one of her emissaries, he said that on hearing the request he had been empowered to make, the King answered that he had already spoken to his cousin, and had advised her as a father might have done; but that as she had made up her mind, and he had already allowed her younger sister to marry the Duc de Guise, he could do nothing but give his consent.

At this point Monsieur had become extremely angry, and had said that there was all the difference in the world between the Duc de Guise and M. de

¹ “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 204.

Lauzun, to which the King answered that he did not see this, that Monsieur, he knew, was fond of strangers,¹ but that he himself liked to keep up the grandeur of his own kingdom. Monsieur—who seems to have completely lost his temper and to have forgotten his usual respect for his brother—answered hotly, “ Say rather, that you are obliged to go on with your own handiwork ; for you are the person who has wished for this all along.”² Monsieur added—though Montausier considerably spared Mademoiselle his further remarks—that she ought to be put into a lunatic asylum, and Lauzun thrown out of the window.³ Monsieur was evidently beside himself with anger, and that the lady who had chosen to demean herself so terribly might possibly have married him, must have added fuel to the flame of his wrath.

Montausier finished by advising Mademoiselle to allow the affair to drag on no longer than was absolutely necessary, but to be married, if possible, that very night ; and Mademoiselle agreed that haste was advisable. Next, a message came from Lauzun begging her to tell the Queen what had happened, and she nerved herself for an unpleasant interview. In the Queen's chamber she knelt, and began to break the news by saying that

¹ This was an allusion to his brother's fondness for M. le Grand, who was of the Lorraine family.

² “ Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 204.

³ “ Journal d'Olivier d'Ormesson,” vol. ii. p. 603.

her Majesty would be astonished to hear that she intended to marry. "Assuredly," the Queen answered in a sharp voice. "What are you thinking of? Are you not sufficiently well off as you are?" Mademoiselle insisting on her right to happiness, and remarking that the Queen generally approved of marriage, and that she could not see why she should be the only person in the world who was to remain single, the latter asked—still acridly—whom she intended to marry, and Mademoiselle telling her, and expatiating on the charms of M. de Lauzun and the precedence he would take in his own country over foreign princes, she said shortly: "I disapprove strongly, cousin, and the King will never approve of it." "He does approve of it, Madame, and the matter is settled." The Queen—who was certainly not tactful—remarked: "You would do much better not to marry, and to leave your property to my son Anjou." "Ah, Madame!" cried the Princess indignantly, "what sentiments you disclose to me! I am ashamed of you. I will say no more to you about the matter."¹

Poor Mademoiselle had had her fill of disagreeable interviews, and she determined to tell Madame d'Épernon the great news in Lauzun's presence, so that she should not be able to say anything rude. At the Queen's reception in the evening she

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 205.

remained in a corner surrounded by her own friends, for fear of hearing adverse criticisms of her resolution ; and she specially dreaded meeting Monsieur, as she was certain that his comments on the affair would be unpleasant.

Lauzun came to her, and she told him of the Queen's reception of the news. He was gay and confident, and consoled her, saying that the King was not ruled by the Queen and Monsieur. His confidence that all would go well was so great that he refused to listen to her when she informed him that Montausier advised a speedy marriage. He wished, he said, to behave with dignity, and to show the King by his modesty that he was worthy of the honour done to him, and therefore he was determined not to hurry on the marriage unduly.

Whatever may have been the disagreeables to which Mademoiselle had to submit, Lauzun found this time one of unclouded triumph. Every one flocked round him, claiming his acquaintance, paying him compliments, and making much of him. He was used to being a personage at Court, but he had never before experienced anything like the ovation he was now receiving. And this was only the beginning of fortune. His head was almost turned, he said, when he thought that he would soon be master of the Luxembourg Palace ; and he was so happy, and felt such gratitude to the Grande Mademoiselle, that he was almost in love with her.

Meanwhile, the news had made an extraordinary sensation throughout the kingdom, and all the foreign ambassadors were amazed at it. The marriage of a personage like Mademoiselle de Montpensier was a State affair; and even Louis XIV. could not with impunity step over the strictly marked border-lines which separated rank from rank. His action in the matter—for no one believed for a moment that the affair could ever have been thought of without his connivance—was a most dangerous innovation.

Never had an affair caused so much excitement,¹ and Louis was attacked on all sides by remonstrances and reproaches. Even the Queen, who never interfered in any State matters, was horrified out of her usual indifference, and spoke to him with much bitterness, thus rousing his anger, and in consequence remaining awake all night crying. Monsieur le Duc, as well as the Great Condé—who had at one time hoped to marry the heiress himself— inveighed most strongly against the folly of the proceeding, and the indignant Condé announced to the King—“though in a respectful manner,”² which must have been a difficult feat—that he would shoot Lauzun directly after the marriage ceremony. Louvois, too, was almost beside himself with rage and terror; he had been madly jealous of Lauzun since the latter

¹ “Choisy Mémoires,” vol. ii. p. 219.

² Petitot, “La Fare Mémoires,” ser. ii. vol. lxxv. p. 18.



From a photo by W. A. Monell & Co. after a painting at Versailles.

LOUIS XIV.

had been put in command of the expedition to Holland, and he realised that, backed by the money and position of his adoring wife, the Duchesse de Montpensier, the little Gascon's power would be enormous.

In fact, "all the Royal House, the Ministers, and the Court, raised their voices clamorously against the marriage."¹ Even Mademoiselle's stepmother, the indolent dowager Duchess of Orleans, was impelled by the imminent danger of the situation to pen a letter of remonstrance to the King. The bourgeoisie, too, were horrified at the extraordinary step contemplated by the Grande Mademoiselle, the Paris Princess, who in the times of the Fronde had been the popular heroine.

Unfortunately, however, the full force of the storm was not apparent to the lovers, the majority of the Court thinking it well to endeavour to conciliate the alarming Lauzun—so soon to become a hundred times more dangerous—by compliments and congratulations; while Lauzun relied with an almost touching faith on his royal master's word, and refused to believe that anything could go wrong when he had once given his promise. Meanwhile Louis, who must have been passing through many unpleasant experiences, continued to say coldly, in reply to all remonstrance, that he did not approve of the proposed marriage, but that he would do

¹ Petitot, "La Fare Mémoires," ser. ii, vol. lxx. p. 182.

nothing to prevent it. Colbert alone among all the influential people at Court sided with Lauzun, because he hoped that his elevation would be a check to the power of his hated rival Louvois ; and Madame Colbert hinted at assassination,¹ warning Mademoiselle that Lauzun ought not to go about alone, and should take special precautions to ensure safety. In fact, Paris had gone mad with rage and excitement, while, although Mademoiselle was occasionally disturbed when a judicious friend tried to convey a warning to her, she and Lauzun were on the whole perfectly calm and confident, and Lauzun at any rate was a striking example of the old proverb that "those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad." In the intoxication of his triumph, his tact, mental acumen and cleverness had deserted him ; and, to judge by his conduct, he might have been a tyro who had never known the insidious windings of Court intrigue, or the power of strong public opinion even in determining the will of a despot. Meanwhile the agitation among the populace, as well as in society, became ever more acute. So tense was the situation that when, ten years later, at the time of the trial of the "Empoisonneuses," Madame de Sévigné wished to give some idea of the excitement in Paris, she felt she could do no better than liken the state of feeling then to what it was at this time : "For two days,"

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 224.

she said, "it has been rather like Mademoiselle's and M. de Lauzun's day ; every one is agitated, asks for news, goes into the houses to learn it, is inquisitive."¹

The best idea of the state of feeling, however, is given by Madame de Sévigné's celebrated letter of Monday, December 15, 1670—the day the King received the deputation and gave his consent to the marriage. It is written throughout on a note of acute exclamation which only her peculiar genius could convey, and it is one of her most celebrated letters :

"PARIS : Monday, *December 15.*

"I am going to tell you the most astonishing thing ; the most surprising, the most marvellous, the most miraculous, the most triumphant, the most amazing, the most unheard-of, the most singular, the most extraordinary, the most incredible, the most unexpected, the greatest, the smallest, the rarest, the most common, the most far-famed, the most secret till to-day, the most brilliant, the most worthy of envy : in short, a thing of which one only finds one instance in past centuries, and even this example is not exactly similar ; a thing which no one can believe in Paris (so how can it possibly be believed in Lyons?) ; a thing which makes every one cry out in amazement ; a thing

¹ Letter, January 26, 1680.

which fills Madame de Rohan and Madame de Hauterive with joy : a thing, in short, which will take place on Sunday, or those who see it will think they are dreaming ; a thing which will take place on Sunday, and which will perhaps not be accomplished on Monday. I cannot make up my mind to tell you ; guess : I give you three guesses. Do you give it up? Well then, I must tell you : M. de Lauzun marries on Sunday at the Louvre : guess whom? I give you four guesses, I give you ten, I give you a hundred. Madame de Coulanges says : ‘ This is very difficult to guess ; is it Madame de la Vallière ? ’ ‘ Certainly not, Madame. ’ ‘ It is, then, Mademoiselle de Retz ? ’ ‘ Certainly not ; you are very provincial. ’ ‘ Really, we are all very stupid,’ you say ; ‘ it is Mademoiselle Colbert. ’ ‘ Most emphatically not. ’ ‘ Then it must be Mademoiselle de Créquy. ’ You are quite wrong. In the end I must tell you : he marries, on Sunday, at the Louvre, with the permission of the King, Mademoiselle . . . Mademoiselle de . . . Mademoiselle . . . guess the name : he marries Mademoiselle, in truth ! in very truth ! I swear it ! Mademoiselle, the Grande Mademoiselle ; Mademoiselle, daughter of the late Monsieur ; Mademoiselle, grand-daughter of Henri IV. ; Mademoiselle d’Eu, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d’Orléans ; Mademoiselle, first cousin to the King ; Mademoiselle, destined for the throne ;

Mademoiselle, the only match in France considered worthy of Monsieur. Here is a splendid subject for discussion. If you cry out, if you are beside yourself, if you say that we are telling untruths, that it is false, that we are laughing at you, that this is a fine joke, that it was a stupid one to think of ; if, in short, you are angry with us, we shall feel that you are right ; we have done the same ourselves.

“ Good-bye ; the letters by the same courier will let you see whether we speak the truth or not.”

CHAPTER XIV

Ominous rumours—Delay in preparations for the marriage—Mademoiselle hands over all her property to Lauzun—"Ce malheureux jeudi"—Difficulties and delays increase—The King prevents the marriage—Reasons for this—Mademoiselle's despair—Lauzun's self-control.

MADemoisELLE tells us that she hardly slept at all on Monday night, and she was up early on Tuesday to receive a crowd of courtiers and to be overwhelmed with compliments, thanks from the nobility for having done them a great honour, and much badinage from every one about her approaching marriage. Altogether the morning passed pleasantly ; but in the afternoon, when she went to pay her respects to the Queen, matters were not so agreeable, for her Majesty was sulky after her sleepless night, and refused to speak to her.

Later on in the day the first ominous note was sounded—a note which, if the lovers had been well advised, should have hurried them into marriage in the course of the next few hours. The Duc de Montausier sent for Lauzun, and told him that the King had been informed that Mademoiselle was telling every one that her approaching marriage

had been arranged by the King, and was done to please him.

This was most serious news ; and Mademoiselle hurried at once to the Council Chamber, and assured the King, in the presence of his Ministers, that she had never said what was attributed to her, knowing it would be a falsehood, as the King had always begged her not to embark on a matter of such importance without much consideration. She assured him that Lauzun's and her one object after their marriage would be to prove themselves faithful subjects to him, and that her property should be spent in his service, as there was nothing more glorious in the world than to follow and serve him. The King appeared very well satisfied with her discourse, and replied that he well knew the truth of all she said, and was pleased with her. The Princess was herself well satisfied with her harangue, which the Ministers politely praised as most eloquent.

When she was leaving the Council Chamber she found Lauzun waiting for her, accompanied by Rochefort, one of the Captains of the Guard, and after the usual compliments he cried, "In God's name, be married to-day rather than to-morrow. At the pinnacle of happiness on which you now are, everything is to be feared." As if to accentuate the gravity of the warning, the Queen passed out of her oratory at this moment with an expression which made the lovers separate ; while at the Court

reception in the evening all the house of Lorraine had gathered together, prepared to fight as one man against the hated marriage.

Even Lauzun began to feel slightly intimidated, and instead of hoping that the wedding would take place in the Queen's chapel at the Tuileries after Mass—"de couronne à couronne," as Madame de Caylus sarcastically terms it—and that the King and Queen would, when it was over, conduct the happy pair to the Luxembourg, it was decided that they must content themselves with a simpler ceremony, and must hurry the matter on as quickly as possible. The night before, joy had interfered with Mademoiselle's sleep; that night she was taken ill with vapours caused by anxiety and worry.

On Wednesday—before Mademoiselle was up—M. de Montausier appeared in much agitation, saying that he had come to scold her because, according to her lover, it was her doing that preparations for the wedding were going on so slowly. Mademoiselle having denied this charge indignantly, Montausier turned to Lauzun and asked him whether he wished to have a royal wedding; and as Lauzun seemed inattentive, and amused himself by examining the pictures inside the enclosure round Mademoiselle's bed, he demanded angrily whether he wanted to start a painter's shop instead of getting married, and told him there was no time to be lost.

Then followed a long discussion, during which Lauzun and Mademoiselle worked themselves up to a slightly heated condition, on the most suitable place for the performance of the marriage ceremony. Eu or Saint-Fargeau would not do, because, if the wedding were to take place there, Lauzun would be separated from the King for three days ; and Conflans—the Richelieus' house—was not approved of by the Grande Mademoiselle, because she was not on intimate terms with the Richelieus. Eventually, however, she gave in to Lauzun's wish that the ceremony should be performed there, and—apparently as an excuse for his irritability—Lauzun told Montausier, who was astonished at the dispute, that he and Mademoiselle were too old to change their habits, and had made a compact that after they were married they would put no constraint on each other, to which the duke—still annoyed by Lauzun's extraordinary folly—answered drily that he hoped he would keep his promise—there was no fear that she would break hers.

When he had gone, Lauzun apologised for his heat, and told Mademoiselle that he had behaved like an idiot.

Again a great crowd besieged the Luxembourg, Louvois and the three Ministers, Lyonne, Colbert, and Le Tellier, being among them.

The Ministers bowed low to the Princess, and made no allusion to the great affair, but talked

on unimportant matters. They had come with very different feelings. Had not jealousy been a sufficient motive for their dislike, Louvois and his father, Le Tellier, had a private grievance against Lauzun which rendered them bitterly hostile to his advancement; while, according to common report, Colbert was—with Madame de Montespan—working for the marriage, as he hoped it would be a counterpoise to the power of Louvois. In the evening, in order to get rid of the crowd, Mademoiselle ordered her carriage and pretended to go out; but she only drove round the garden, and at five o'clock Lauzun came to visit her, and the auspicious omen of having both seen the new moon consoled them in the midst of their anxieties.

Then the lawyers made their appearance, and Mademoiselle handed over the whole of her property to her lover: "The comté d'Eu, which is the first peerage in France, and which gives the highest rank of all; the duché de Montpensier, the duché de Saint-Fargeau, and the duché de Châtellerault," says Madame de Sévigné,¹ "besides the sovereignty of Dombes"; indeed, a goodly heritage. Guilloire, medical man to the Grande Mademoiselle, was horrified at the imprudence of this step, and refused to believe for some time that she really intended to part with all her pro-

¹ Letter, December 19, 1670

perty.¹ Even when she had at last told him impatiently that it was her intention to give everything without reserve to her husband, he returned again and again to the charge, asking whether she would not keep something to dispose of at her death. The infatuated Princess replied in the negative, saying that she could trust Lauzun to reward her faithful friends and servants better than she would do it herself. Even then Boucherat, the lawyer employed to draw up the contract, did not give up all hope of persuading her of her folly, sending to warn her that once married she would be mistress of nothing, and advising that she should at least reserve something to herself for charitable purposes. In reply to his remonstrances, Mademoiselle wrote him a letter in which she said that she would never be more mistress than when Lauzun possessed everything, and that with a heart like his, there was more fear he would give too much in charity than too little. After this it was impossible to say more, but Boucherat and Guilloire dawdled over the contract as much as they dared.

At last it was signed ; and Mademoiselle led Lauzun proudly into the next room, where a few faithful friends were assembled, among them being Madame de Nogent, who had now been allowed to leave the retirement in which her brother had kept her for the last few days.

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 242.

“I bring you the Duc de Montpensier,” cried Mademoiselle gaily; “for the future I must beg you to call him by no other name.”¹

There was much laughter, and many compliments followed, as well as badinage about Lauzun’s reputation as a lady-killer. Then the talk became more serious. The idea of having the wedding at the Royal Chapel in the presence of the King and Queen, had now been abandoned. Celerity and privacy were recognised—even by the enthusiastic Lauzun—as absolute necessities if the marriage were to take place at all, and it was settled that the ceremony should be gone through at Conflans the next day. However, in the evening Mademoiselle received a letter from her lover by the hand of Barail his faithful friend, whose acquaintance she had long wished to make, and with whom she was to have much intercourse in the future. The letter contained bad news. It informed her that the Duc de Richelieu could not lend his house for the ceremony, as the Duchess was afraid of the Queen’s displeasure. Lauzun put a brave face on the matter, and announced that he was rather glad of this, as Mademoiselle did not seem to wish to be married at Conflans. The Duc de Créqui had offered Epone; but it was too far off, and, being in the diocese of Chartres instead of that of Paris, there would be delay in drawing up the banns.

¹ “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 226.

However, the Marquise de Créqui possessed a house at Charenton, and Mademoiselle told Barail that this would be the most suitable place for the wedding.

On the following day, "ce malheureux jeudi," as Mademoiselle calls it, she rose early, and was greeted by Madame de Nogent with the news that the marriage contract could not be finished that morning. This intimation came like a thunderclap, and put off the marriage till after midnight next day, as Mademoiselle said she could not possibly be married on Friday, for fear of ill luck. Everything seemed to conspire against the unhappy couple. In truth, a formidable combination was arranged against them, and the Archbishop of Paris, influenced by Le Tellier and Louvois—who were both of them bitterly inimical to "le petit Gascon"¹—had deferred the business of drawing up the banns of marriage as long as it was possible to do so.

At least one thing was satisfactory. The Maréchal de Créqui wrote to offer the house at Charenton, and, as Lauzun could not be found, Mademoiselle sent to accept the invitation. At nine o'clock, before the crowd of courtiers was admitted to the Luxembourg, Madame de Sévigné came to see Mademoiselle, and in her inimitable way relates what happened: "On that same Thursday I went at nine o'clock in the morning to see Mademoiselle, having been told that she was going to be married

¹ Petitot, "La Fare Mémoires," ser. ii. vol. lxxv. p. 182.

in the country, and that the Coadjutor of Rheims would perform the ceremony. So it had been settled on Wednesday evening, for as to the Louvre, that had been altered since Tuesday. Mademoiselle was writing ; she admitted me, finished her letter, and then made me kneel beside her bed. She told me to whom she was writing, and why, and about the beautiful presents and the title she had given the night before ; said that there was no suitable *parti* for her in Europe, and that she was anxious to marry. She related to me word for word a conversation she had had with the King ; she seemed to me transported with joy at making a man so fortunate ; she talked to me with tenderness of the virtues and gratitude of M. de Lauzun ; and my remark on all this was : ‘ Good Heavens ! Mademoiselle ? You are no doubt at present perfectly happy, but why did you not bring the affair to a termination last Monday ? Don’t you see that so long a delay gives time for the whole kingdom to chatter, and that it is tempting God and the King to linger over so extraordinary an affair ? ’ She answered that I was right ; but she was so full of confidence, that this discourse at that time only made a slight impression on her. She returned to the topic of the family and good qualities of M. de Lauzun. I repeated to her Sévère’s words in Polyeucte :

‘ At least no one can blame her for a foolish choice :
Polyeucte has the name, and inherits the blood of kings.’

She embraced me heartily. This conversation lasted for an hour. It is impossible to repeat all of it ; but I was certainly a most agreeable companion all that time, and I can say this without vanity, for she was delighted to speak to somebody : her heart was quite full."¹

Later in the day Guilloire, who—with a brutality which was naturally never forgiven—had told Mademoiselle that she was a laughing-stock and object for opprobrium throughout Europe—at last made a virtue of necessity, and asked, with feelings we can well imagine, to be presented to M. de Lauzun, who received him graciously, and said that if he served Mademoiselle well, they would always be friends.

As usual, a great crowd of people thronged the Luxembourg all day ; among them moved Lauzun, anxious, haggard, and untidy. According to Segrais,² the head of Mademoiselle's household, who was afterwards dismissed because of his conduct at this time, Lauzun knew that the marriage was broken off twenty-four hours before the Princess, but feared to tell her. As Segrais hated Mademoiselle, his account of her doings and feelings is most inaccurate, and this assertion seems on the face of it unlikely, being contrary to Louis' written statement, with which the well-informed Olivier d'Ormesson only differs to the unimportant extent

¹ Letter, December 31, 1670.

² "Segraisiana," p. 107.

of representing the King's interview with Lauzun as taking place just before instead of after that with Mademoiselle. Besides, why should Lauzun make a confidant of a man whom he knew to be his bitter enemy ; and if the news had been generally circulated, some officious friend would certainly have informed Mademoiselle in the course of the next half-hour.

However, without knowing anything for certain, Lauzun had much to make him anxious. By this time he realised the strength of the forces ranged in battle order against him, and he must have cursed the folly of the grand preparations which in the first place caused the wedding to be delayed, and the over-confidence which had made him wish for magnificent ceremonial.

The only thing to be done now was to fight to the end against overwhelming odds ; and Lauzun rushed about all day, working, interviewing, scheming—everywhere met by a wall of solid resistance. His change of demeanour towards Mademoiselle shows that he was beginning to have grave doubts as to whether the matter would ever be carried through, and was anxious not to burn his boats behind him. He refused on this Thursday to sit in her presence, and when she laughed and said that ceremony was no longer necessary, he replied : “ No, I shall not sit down ; I will not, because if I am unfortunate enough for the affair to come to nothing, I do

not wish to have to reproach myself with any failure of respect towards you, either in word or deed.”¹

He then begged her to consider well whether she were not beginning to repent the bold step she contemplated, and told her that even if she were before the altar, and felt any qualms as to the wisdom of what she was doing, he implored her, as the greatest kindness she could do him, not to say “yes,” when she was asked whether she would take him as her husband. She was naturally indignant at this harangue, and asked whether it was he who had repented and felt that he did not love her. “I will never say I love you till we are leaving the church,” was his strange answer. He added, “I would rather die than tell you what I feel for you, except the greatest gratitude in the world.”

The lovers then made plans for the next day. Mademoiselle was to go to confession, and leave for Charenton at four o'clock in the afternoon, while Lauzun would first go to Colbert's house, where he had business, and would sleep at the public baths, which at that time took, to a certain extent, the place of our modern clubs.

Next morning he would go to confession, and would then follow Mademoiselle to Charenton, arriving there about half-past five. Meanwhile,

¹ “Montpensier Mémoires,” vol. iv. p. 230.

Colbert would take the contract of marriage to the King and to Monseigneur for their signatures. "As to Monsieur and my other relations," said the Grande Mademoiselle proudly, "no one thought of them, the one thing necessary being the consent of the head of the house."¹ The truth, however, seems to have been that both the Queen and Monsieur refused to sign the contract, saying the marriage would be an insult, not only to the Grande Mademoiselle herself, as grand-daughter to Henri-Quatre, but also to the King and to all those who had the honour of being nephews and nieces to Mademoiselle's great ancestor.²

Louis must have felt that matters were indeed serious when the timid Monsieur, and even the submissive Queen, refused to obey his will ; but apart from the pride of race which was Marie-Thérèse's strongest characteristic, the knowledge that her powerful rival Madame de Montespan was supposed to be Lauzun's strongest supporter, must have nerved her to the utmost opposition in her power.

The necessary signatures were at last obtained, and it was settled that the marriage service should be performed by the curé of Charenton half an hour after midnight—which was then the favourite time for a wedding.

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 232.

² See letter from the Spanish Ambassador to Don Diego de la Torre, "Archives de la Bastille," vol. iv. p. 95.

Rumours were in circulation as to the adverse attitude of the Archbishop of Paris to the affair, so Mademoiselle and Lauzun decided that it would be wisest not to allow him to have anything to do with it. The next day the happy pair were to return to Paris, and Lauzun would dine with the King, who would, he hoped, do Mademoiselle the honour of coming to see her, and perhaps of bringing the Queen. The Princess was not, however, sanguine about this.

During the afternoon Mademoiselle amused herself with preparing the room destined for her husband, and at six o'clock, when the witty and dissipated Abbé de Choisy called, she showed it to him. It was magnificently furnished, and her remark as she did the honours, showed a little ostentation mingled with honest delight at what she could do for the man she loved: "Don't you agree," she said, "that the younger son of a Gascon family will be pretty well lodged?"

Afterwards, they sat and talked before the fire. But an atmosphere of depression brooded over everything. Lauzun had a bad cold, and his eyes were red and inflamed. The rest of the party tried to be lively. They made jokes about the melancholy attitude of the lovers; but Mademoiselle could not rouse herself to cheerfulness, and wept when she said good-bye to Lauzun, who was sad also.

When he had gone, the guests also took their

leave, and Mademoiselle remained alone with Madame de Nogent.

At eight o'clock, they were disturbed by the news that a messenger had arrived from the King, and with a beating heart Mademoiselle went into her business room to receive him.

He had come as the result of a most troubled and agitated afternoon at the Louvre, culminating in Madame de Montespan showing a complete change of front, and betraying Lauzun's interests.

She had throughout been his confidante, and it even appears from a letter written by her to Lauzun, that all the unfortunate Mademoiselle's love-letters—no doubt intended for his perusal alone—were delivered into her keeping. The letter is specially interesting, as it gives a glimpse of some of the disadvantages of Madame de Montespan's ambiguous position. It runs thus:

"AT SAINT-GERMAIN, *one o'clock.*

"M. Colbert is at Versailles, and I was going to find him when I left the table; but when I talked about my journey, the King said that he was taking the Queen there after dinner, and that only those who travelled in his carriage were to go. I ought certainly to have a place in it; but there are no rules about anything to do with me. So it will be necessary to wait till to-morrow evening, when M. Colbert returns, to speak to him; and as you

think that Mademoiselle will ask for her letters, I am sending them back to you ; but if you can have them again or keep them, it will be a good thing to send them back to me, so that I can show them.

"I understand your directions perfectly, and you may believe with reason that I think and wish the same as you do about it." ¹

Another letter, written about the same time, and very cautious and mysterious, at least proves that Madame de Montespan was working with Mademoiselle and Lauzun.

"AT SAINT-GERMAIN, *two o'clock on Friday.*

"I have shown your letter, and yesterday I asked the King for an order for Mademoiselle. He told me that he did not understand what sort of order he was wanted to give, because a place or reason would be necessary. I have written to tell Mademoiselle the same thing. I warn you, so that you may persuade her to do whatever you wish.

"M. Colbert only arrives this evening ; I will not fail to show him your letter, and if all this worry continues, I will go one day to Paris. As Mademoiselle will know it, you will know it also." ²

¹ Clément, "Louis XIV. et Madame de Montespan," p. 218.

² *Ibid.* p. 219.

Mademoiselle was evidently in strong hands, and there seems no doubt that Madame de Montespan was working with the utmost activity.

It must also be said in justice to that lady that, though she had paled at Monsieur's threats, and at the fury of the Great Condé, either a faint and unaccustomed sense of honour, or fear of her past experiences when she had deceived Lauzun, had kept her steadfast to his cause in the face of all difficulties. So far advanced, indeed, was the affair, that on Thursday morning the King told M. de Lyonne to write to all the Ambassadors, and to give formal notice of the approaching marriage.¹

During this fateful afternoon, however, the old Princess de Carignan paid Madame de Montespan a visit, and put before her most convincingly the fact that she would be ruined if the marriage were accomplished by her means, because Monsieur and the rest of the Royal Family would never forgive her, and when once her time of favour with the King was over, she would be exposed to the greatest danger.²

When the distracted Madame de Montespan applied to her judicious friend Madame Scarron for advice, that lady agreed entirely with Madame de Carignan, and proved even more strongly to Madame de Montespan the storm her championship

¹ D'Ormesson, "Journal," vol. ii. p. 695.

² Chéruel, "Mémoires," vol. ii. p. 221.

of Lauzun would in the future bring down on her, declaring that in time even the King would reproach her with the results of her handiwork.¹

Terrified at these representations, Madame de Montespan went in a state of extreme agitation to the King and implored him for her sake to stop the marriage.

Probably her entreaties chimed in with Louis' own wishes, for he must by this time have been worried almost beyond endurance ; and his common sense must have shown him that the marriage might entail most dangerous consequences ; so that possibly he might have withdrawn his word even without her interference. For the story to the effect that the proposed alliance was a scheme on his part to aggrandise his favourite at Mademoiselle's expense, was going from mouth to mouth, and was in the highest degree prejudicial to Louis' reputation and kingly prestige.

Therefore, after an afternoon passed in much agitation and uncertainty—every one being on the tiptoe of excitement—Louis finally made up his mind that in the interests of the State as well as of his own dignity, his word must be broken, and the messenger was dispatched to the Grande Mademoiselle.

Her pride was great, and, though trembling, she no doubt received him with the dignity of a

¹ Petitot, "La Fare Mémoires," ser. ii, vol. lxxv. p. 182.

highborn Princess who was cousin to the greatest King in the world. He said, "The King has commanded me to tell you to come to him at once." "Is he playing cards?" she asked, feeling that much depended on the answer. "No, he is with Madame de Montespan."

Something important must be in the making for the King to break through his usual habits, and Mademoiselle returned to Madame de Nogent with her heart full of misgiving. "I am in despair!" cried she. "Our affair is broken off."

"Monsieur de Lauzun would surely have known if that had been the case!" ejaculated Madame de Nogent, with ready faith in her brother.¹

Mademoiselle ordered the carriage, and they started at once, she in so distracted a condition that she could not think steadily of anything. When they arrived at the Louvre, Madame de Nogent stayed in the carriage, and Mademoiselle was asked to go by the private entrance straight to the King's room.

On her way, Rochefort came and begged her to wait for a moment, and she realised that some one was being admitted to the King's room whom she was not intended to see. Then the King called "Come in," and the door was shut behind her. Louis was apparently alone, and appeared to be in low spirits. He told her that he was in despair

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 233.

at what he had to say to her, but that every one declared that he was sacrificing her to make Lauzun's fortune ; that this report would injure his prestige in foreign lands, and that therefore he could not allow the affair to proceed. He begged her in justice to complain of him, said that she might beat him if she pleased—that he would excuse any outbreak of passion from her, as he had deserved it.

She threw herself at his feet and cried, "Sire, it would be better to kill me than to treat me as you are doing ! If, when I first spoke about the matter, your Majesty had forbidden it, I should never have thought of it ; but to break off the affair when it has got to this point ! How will it look ? What will become of me ?" Then—with sudden fear for her lover's safety—"Where is Monsieur de Lauzun ?"

"Do not agitate yourself ; nothing will be done to him."

"Ah, Sire, I am forced to fear everything for him and for myself, as our enemies have prevailed over the kindness you had for him."¹

The King threw himself on his knees at the same time as his cousin, and embraced her—according to her account, remaining for three-quarters of an hour with his cheek against hers.

Though an artificial and ceremonious age, it was

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 234.

yet in some respects unrestrained ; and it is a curious fact that in spite of his rigid self-control in some respects, Louis was peculiarly emotional—weeping at certain crises of his life till he could not show himself in public because of his swollen eyes. On this occasion he shed as many tears—we are told—as his unfortunate cousin, who exclaimed that the blow to her hopes was all the greater because it was dealt by the person for whom she cared most on earth. It was the first time she had been in love—she cried—and she should die, she would be only too glad to die, now that she had been deprived of the most fascinating man in the kingdom. The King had never failed to fulfil a promise before ; why should he begin with her and M. de Lauzun ? she inquired reproachfully. To which Louis asked her, almost with equal reproachfulness, why, when once his consent had been given, she had lingered, and had thus given every one time for reflection ? There was no possible answer to this, except that she had trusted to his word and that he was tearing her heart from her.

In the midst of her transports of grief and rage, when, according to one contemporary, she not only declaimed against M. le Tellier, but spoke against the King himself—even to the length of calling him “a devil”—¹ she heard some one cough, and was at once suspicious. “To whom are you

¹ “Journal d’Ormesson,” vol. ii. p. 605.

sacrificing me, Sire ? ” she asked ; “ is it to Monsieur le Prince ? ” And in fact the Great Condé was at that moment behind the door, occupying—by royal permission—the undignified position of eavesdropper.

The King did not answer, but inculcated the duty of obedience, and assured her that in the future he would find it impossible to refuse her anything. This was cruel comfort. She only wanted one thing, she sobbed ; nothing else would content her. Louis was very patient. He did his best to console her, but seeing that she only became more and more violent, he raised his voice so that he should be heard by the listener at the door, and announced, as his declaration of faith, that “ kings must satisfy public opinion.” Then he told her that it was late, and that however long she were to stay, his decision would not alter.

He embraced her and led her to the door, where, though she was past recognising any one, she could see confusedly that several people were standing ; and she rushed through them and hurried to her carriage, breaking the windows on the way home in an attack of hysterics.

Although it was by this time nine o'clock in the evening, an eager and excited crowd had assembled in the Luxembourg Palace to await her return. Among them was Choisy, the author of the *Memoirs*. He says, “ Two of her footmen came into the room shouting, ‘ Go out quickly

by the staircase !' Every one crowded out at once, but I was among the last to go, and saw the Princess appear at the end of the hall, where the guards were stationēd, like a fury, with dishevelled hair, and throwing her arms about wildly." ¹

Such was the end of Mademoiselle's dream of happiness.

When his interview with his cousin was over, the King—who was certainly going through a most agitating day—admitted the Duc de Créqui, the Marquis de Guitry, and the Duc de Montausier, who were doubtless the people waiting outside when the unfortunate Mademoiselle came out, and told them his resolution, which it was to be their duty to impart to Lauzun. Afterwards, he sent for his favourite and informed him, no doubt sympathetically—for Lauzun was his personal friend, and we may reasonably suppose he was sorry for him—that for many reasons he could not allow the marriage to take place, but that he would take care to make him as great, unmarried, as he would have been married. ²

Lauzun was, unlike Mademoiselle, prepared for the blow ; and with admirable self-control he stifled his indignation and trouble, and throwing himself at the King's feet, cried, "Sire, the opportunity for which I have most longed now comes to me, that

¹ "Choisy Mémoires," vol. ii. p. 221.

² D'Ormesson's "Journal," vol. ii. p. 604.

of giving the greatest mark possible of my submission to the will of your Majesty.”¹

The King was naturally surprised and relieved at this unexpected submission, which must have been all the more delightful from its contrast to poor Mademoiselle's behaviour, as also with the resistance to his wishes which he had encountered during the last few days from most unexpected quarters; and he assured Lauzun with the utmost warmth, that to indemnify him for his disappointment, he would treat him with such generosity that all his enemies would be jealous.

Composure in the King's presence was comparatively easy—a far more trying duty was exacted from Lauzun. Whatever happened, etiquette must be observed, “one must die according to rule,” as Madame de Maintenon said wearily in her old age. It was correct, whatever his or her feelings might be, that Lauzun should at once be escorted by Montausier, Créqui, and Guitry to the Grande Mademoiselle, and should thank her for the honour she had proposed to do him; while the envoys should at the same time express to the Princess and her lover the satisfaction the King felt at the submission of their conduct, and should give a promise in his Majesty's name that he would do so much for Lauzun in the future, that his lady-love would feel satisfied.

¹ “Segraisiana,” p. 107.

The meeting was most trying, for Mademoiselle became hysterical when her lover first appeared; and when addressed by the deputation, she only sobbed despairingly and cried, "Everything is in vain; separated from him, I shall never be happy!" Lauzun, too, had much ado to avoid breaking down. However, he soon mastered himself, and told her with the utmost composure that if she were to follow his advice she would go next day to dine at the Tuileries, and would thank the King for preventing a thing of which she would have repented all her life.

"I shall not follow your advice," she cried, her voice broken by sobs; "I shall weep all my life, and I shall never repent." She turned to the envoys: "Let me speak to him alone!" she cried, and she drew her lover aside. He had broken down by this time; they could neither of them speak. Only she sobbed, "What! Shall I never see you again? If that happens I shall die!"¹

Then the deputation left, and the unfortunate woman was at last alone. She went to bed, and was twenty-four hours without speaking, and almost without consciousness.

Meanwhile, the news was announced publicly by eleven that night, and every one praised the King for his timely action in the matter, as the marriage would have covered him with shame.²

¹ "Montpensier Mémoires," vol. iv. p. 239.

² "Journal d'Olivier d'Ormesson," vol. ii. p. 605.

The breaking-off of the affair, caused almost as much talk and excitement as the announcement of it had done. "It was," according to Madame de Sévigné, "a beautiful subject to reason about and talk of eternally ; and that is what we do day and night, evening and morning, without finish, and without ceasing."¹

She adds in another letter,² "It is the right subject for a tragedy according to all the rules of the theatre. The other day we arranged the acts and scenes ; we took four days instead of twenty-four hours, and it made a perfect play. Never were such changes seen in so short a time ; never was such general emotion ; never was heard so extraordinary a story."

Bussy was equally excited. He writes to Madame du Bouchet on January 7, 1671³ : "I cannot become accustomed to believing in Mademoiselle's affair. At first, when I begin to think about it after a lapse of time, I take it for my latest dream ; and if I had not received twenty letters from trustworthy people on the subject, I should always feel doubtful about it. In addition to the interest I take in Monsieur de Lauzun's fortunes, there is another circumstance which annoys me, and that is that I like to be astonished, I like to witness extraordinary events, and that after this nothing can possibly surprise me.

"As you say, if this loss of a splendid fortune does

¹ Letter to Coulanges, December 19, 1670.

² To Coulanges, December 24, 1670.

³ "Correspondance de Bussy-Rabutin," vol. ii. p. 63.

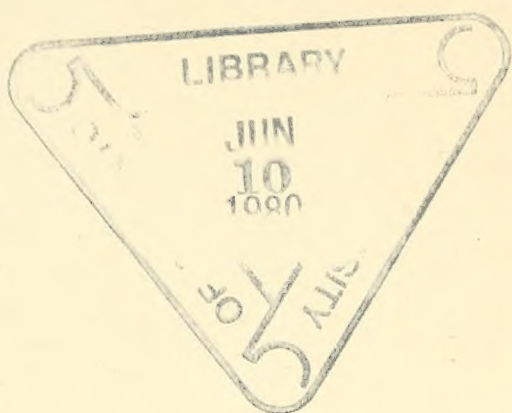
not crush Monsieur de Lauzun, he must have a steady head. The King, who is fond of him and has prevented this great affair, will make up to him for it."

To another correspondent he writes, on January 10, 1671: "Do not forget to tell me all you know of the affair between Monsieur de Lauzun and Mademoiselle; I cannot hear about it from too many sources; besides, each separate person tells me something that the other does not. Ah! why are we not still unmarried, my dear fellow? In the mood of the ladies nowadays, we should at least espouse foreign princesses!"

Amid all the amusement and ridicule excited by the catastrophe, it is a comfort to read Mademoiselle de Scudéry's comment, as it shows human sympathy—a sympathy rare in those hard, glittering days—for what was, even if absurd, a very real trouble. She writes to Bussy:¹

"I will tell you nothing of Mademoiselle de Montpensier's affair; you will know without doubt all that has happened. I will add only that if you knew what a great passion is in the heart of an honest person like her, you would be astonished, and would pity her . . . she does not sleep at night, she is restless all day, she weeps; in short, she leads the most miserable life in the world."

¹ Mademoiselle de Scudéry à Bussy, January 21, 1671. "Bussy Rabutin Correspondance," vol. ii. p. 70.



2 vols
loc

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

DC
130
L37S26
1909
v.1

Sandars, Mary Frances
Lauzun : courtier and
adventurer

